

The Papacy and the Enlightenment

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The fantasist and his fan

By Eric Korn

PHILIP ROTH:

Zuckerman Unbound
225pp. Jonathan Cape. £5.95.
0 224 01974 0

Fiction is not autobiography, yet all fiction, I am convinced, is in some sense rooted in autobiography, though the connection to actual events may be tenuous indeed... yet there are dangers in writing so closely on the heels of one's own immediate experience: a lack of toughness, perhaps; a tendency to indulgence; an urge to justify the author's ways to men.

Wise and relevant words: well, not exactly. For Philip Roth here puts them in the handwriting of one Alvin Pepler, ex-Marine, ex-quizz columnist, Newark (NJ) patriot, paranoid and all-time Jewish and all-comers nudnik champion. You don't have to be Jewish (as the kosher pickle adverts say) to be a nudnik, that special kind of aggressive, parasitic bore, but it's no disadvantage, especially in dealing with co-religionists, especially one as vulnerable to every kind of guilt-inducing intrusion as this sour, shrewd and often very funny novel's eponym, Nathan Zuckerman, who is suffering, in addition to all his congenial burdens, the stress of sudden wealth and fame from the success of his novel *Carnovsky*, to say nothing of the problem of going through the change of life.

Though *Carnovsky* is plainly akin to *Portnoy's Complaint*, its onanism and variously sexual themes, and in the scandal and enraged accusations of anti-Semitism it provokes, it needs to be said that Zuckerman's response to success is not Roth's to his "public reputation... a concoction spawned by *Portnoy's Complaint* and compounded largely out of the fantasies that book gave rise to because of its 'confessional' strategy... (interview with Joyce Carol Oates, from *Reading Myself and Others*). Roth, as he relates, wisely took to the hills (actually a writers' refuge in Saratoga Springs) on publication and emerged after four months to find that rumour had put him successively into the arms of Barbara Streisand and into a lunatic asylum.

There is a lot then of somewhat uneasy-provoking fiction/fiction play in this novel, signalled very early on: in fact on the fly-leaf, which bears an epigraph from the table-talk of E.I. Lonoff, the at-least-partly imaginary literary eminence of *The Ghost Writer*. It is a two-edged, self-referring disclaimer, like Waugh's note to *Brideshead Revisited*: "I am not I; thou art not he or she; they are not they." Or, as someone else wrote, "There is no such place as Manchester." Roth, to be sure, knows precisely what he is doing: there is no where in the recursive maze of self-awareness where he has not preceded the reader; and at times the sure knowingness with which he knows we know he knows rises from the book like an opaque deliriant gas.

Novels about unsuccessful writers are an inveterate tradition; but there are problems (as John Braine has recently explained to him at length) about depicting a successful novelist, if there are any superficial similarities between the author and his creation. It is all right to have people approach the narrator, as they do in the splendidly comic opening scene of this novel, and say "What the hell are you doing on a bus with your money?" or even "Hey, you do all that stuff in that book? With all those chicks?" This after all can be seen as sardonic self-deprecation, familiar and acceptable (particularly in England). But beware when you make characters say "trudeau was here, and he wanted to meet you. Abbas Eban was here and mentioned your name to me. Yves Saint Laurent is giving a big party and his office called for your number" or "You're our Mr. Proust, Mr. Zuckerman." The

humour. The compassion. The understanding of our deepest drives. Even if (especially if) the character who says these things gets sent to something rotten, it is easy to feel that one is being treated to a display of conspicuous achievement.

Especially sexual achievement. If it wasn't for the disclaimer in *Reading Myself and Others*, I might be resentfully wondering about the original of Chesara O'Shea, the Celtic ballistic missile ("all the sorrows of her race and then those splendid tits"). I would be wrong. "Creating the illusion of intimacy and spontaneity is not just a matter of letting your hair down and being yourself but of inventing a whole new idea of what 'being yourself' sounds and looks like; 'naturalness' happens not to grow on trees," as Roth has said in a different context.

Zuckerman's idyll with Chesara is short-lived: she has other, less *gaffe* fish to fry, being, it is alleged, the mistress of Fidel Castro. (Her touching farewell runs into six lines, quotes Yeats and Byron, and bears a Havana post-mark.) And Zuckerman must return to the importunities of other correspondents, the reproaches of the enraged, the attentions of fantasists, and the unspeakable Alvin Pepler.

Pepler is a great comic monster, the embodiment of what Joyce Carol Oates called "the experience of enduring the bizarre projections of others." He is a psychopath with a weird grievance (among many). The only contestant in the vast and fraudulent quiz shows of the 1950s who wasn't prompted but actually knew all the answers, he was forced to take a dive by the network bosses so that the big money could go to some generally acceptable WASP winner. Pepler is planning to recoup his position with an autobiographical musical, and has fabricated a fantasy producer, one Marty Paté, of sybaritic tastes ("Cut flowers in the bathroom... And the food, it all send out, down to salt and pepper"). He pursues Zuckerman with obsequiousness, elaborate demands, and unstoppable monologues, like his mad ranking of the literary giants of Newark, their common hometown:

In my estimation you are up there with Stephen Crane... There's Mary Mapes Dodge, but however much you may admire *Hans Brinker*, it's still only a book for children. It would have to place her third. Then there is LeRoy Jones but him I have no trouble in placing fourth. I say this without racial prejudice, and not as a result of the tragedy that has happened to the city in recent years...

Given some encouragement by the willing victim Zuckerman, he produces the review of *Carnovsky*, naturally already cited. Thinks Zuckerman, who has been studying him as possible material, "When the lion comes up to Hemingway with his review of 'The short happy life of Francis Macomber', it's time to leave the jungle for home."

Worse, Pepler solicits Zuckerman's opinion. "It's straining, isn't it, for an effect?" suggests the tactful Zuckerman, but Pepler replies "That's where you're wrong. It was no strain at all. It just came to me."

Moments later he goes over the top: "The truth unbiased, that's what I want. Unbiased by the fact that you only wrote that book because you could. Because of having every break in life there is! While the ones who didn't obviously couldn't! Unbiased by the fact that those hang-ups you wrote about happen to be mine and that you knew it, that you stole it." It is Pepler's obsessive identification with the protagonist of *Carnovsky* who like his prototype Alexander Portnoy is both fantasist and fantasy, the wankers' wanker as you might say) that has engendered the assault on Zuckerman, an assault that includes inept but still effective threatening telephone calls. After Pepler's campaign has reached its ejaculatory climax, Zuckerman wonders: "Was that the end of this barrage? Or would Zuckerman's imagination

tion beget still other Peplers conjuring up novels out of his - novels disguising themselves as actuality itself, as nothing less than real?"

Pepler's outburst is but one of the chain of denunciations of Zuckerman which forms the book's backbone. He is harangued by his agent ("In all my experience of high-strung prima donnas, I have never seen anyone make such a fiasco of fame and fortune"), by his estranged wife's friend Rosemary ("Everytime you leave your voice on her message machine it puts the poor girl back another two months"), by his dying father, whose paralysed lips can just frame the word "bastard", and climactically by his brother after their return from the funeral: "We protest you from knowing what you really are. And what you've done. You killed him, Nathan... Do you really think that conscience is a Jewish invention from which you are immune?" The answer is unspoken, but then the question, like many, perhaps too many here, is rhetorical.

The remedy for *Portnoy's Complaint*, naturally, is *Letting Go*. At the end of this intelligent but not wholly congenial book Zuckerman has let go altogether, his alienation completed by the discovery that the old Newark synagogue of his childhood is now an African Methodist Episcopal church: "You are no longer any man's son, you are no longer some good woman's husband, you are no longer your brother's brother and you don't come from anywhere any more." Zuckerman is unbound, but, like Prometheus, feeling distinctly liverish.

The real Macondo

By Hilary Spurling

The Diary of "Helena Morley"
Translated and introduced by Elizabeth Bishop
281pp. Virago. £3.50.
0 86068 200 5

Helena Morley is the pseudonym of Alice Dayrell, child of a Brazilian mother and an English diamond miner, born a hundred years ago in the tiny, remote Brazilian mining town of Diamantina where, between the ages of twelve and fifteen, she kept this diary. Helena grew up to marry a bank president, raise a family and become a pillar of society in Rio de Janeiro. It was not until she was in her sixties that her only book, published for private circulation in 1942, brought her fame and a handsome if condescending testimonial ("It is possible that you do not even know the value of what you have given us") from the exiled Georges Bernanos, who compared Helena's talent with Rimbaud's. Elizabeth Bishop, in a preface to her English translation first published in 1957, was reminded of passages from Homer, Chaucer, Mark Twain and both the Wordsworths.

But for anyone reading this Virago reissue, the obvious comparison is with Gabriel García Márquez's strange, heady, potent distillation of a fabulous South American reality in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1957). For the small town Helena describes, with its street sellers peddling sweets and caged singing birds, its legends, processions, celebrations, its witchcraft and sudden death, is next door to Márquez's mythical Macondo. Diamantina is isolated by its mountains as effectively as Macondo by its swamps. Men like Helena's father (who earns barely enough to support a family from diamonds no bigger "than a mosquito's eye") are visionaries, gambling whole lifetimes on the chance of a fortune in the next sieveful of gravel.

Their wives cook, sew, gossip, make lace and wash clothes in the mountain streams but, like the women of Macondo, they too can rise above the humdrum at times. A beautiful bride falls victim (as Ro-

beca did in Macondo) to a jealous enemy's spell, lies for days entranced on Helena's grandmother's kitchen table and is eventually buried, dead or alive ("Glorinha... told me that she had heard Bela cry out when they pressed down the earth on top of her"). Another girl dying of consumption - Cacilda Finemata, a pupil at Helena's school - is declared a saint and (like Remedios the Beauty, who ascended while folding sheets one afternoon in Macondo) achieves an assumption, as Helena rather cattily records: "Cacilda's sanctity grew in such a way that very soon there were people who had seen the cloud carrying her up to heaven and the skies opening to receive her".

But it is not easy for an intelligent and sceptical child to sort reality from illusion in Diamantina: when her sister is cured of cancer on the saint's intervention, even the hard-headed Helena comes to credit Cacilda's miracles. She is too old to believe any longer in werewolves and the headless mule, or for that matter in the thief whose ability to turn himself into an ant hill terrifies other people (including Helena's own devoted and credulous mother); and she laughs openly at Domingos the barber's schemes for making money by breeding sardines in a mountain stream, or for catching jaguars with flea powder ("I climb a tree with a gun and a tin of powder. From up above, I cough, to attract the jaguar's attention. She looks up, I throw the powder in her eyes, and then I shoot and kill her").

News reaches Diamantina fitfully and often thoroughly garbled, like the inventions brought to Macondo by gypsies. Helena is rebuked for repeating a cousin's tall story about men being descended from monkeys; a friend, half-cracked (like Márquez's José Arcadio Buendía) by wild tales of discovery, "spends his time weighing vultures on the scales in order to invent a flying-machine"; when the first telegraph is inaugurated at a party in Helena's uncle's house, "mama and my aunts were open-mouthed to see how the messages were correct".

These aunts are Helena's mother's sisters, held in check along with their husbands and brothers by her Brazilian grandmother, an unexpectedly indulgent matriarch who schools

Helena in the great Latin American orthodoxies of family, church and the proposition that politics are no concern of "nice people". On the other side stands Aunt Madge, Helena's father's sister: an unending protestant English spinster dedicated to maintaining standards of a very different sort in the face of almost all possible odds. It is Aunt Madge who takes Helena in hand, dresses her in clothes that make her a laughing stock to her schoolfriends, and teaches her outlandish customs like changing one's shoes before going into the garden, not sleeping in one's clothes, not spitting on the floor or not picking one's teeth at table.

Through Aunt Madge we get a glimpse of the quaint, stiff, little provincial society which Richard Burton found when he visited Diamantina in the 1860s, met Helena's grandfather and escorted Madge herself to a party: the visit of Burton the Englishman, representative of an exotic, far-flung, even fabulous civilization, presides over Helena's childhood and much as the exploits of Drake and Raleigh haunt the jungle round Macondo, Aunt Madge, who knew Burton, is a source of endless humiliation to her niece but also of great pride, inspired by her efforts to tame and subdue a stubbornly alien environment. In a world where babies regularly die or go blind it is not only children who need to establish some sort of hold over chaos and adversity.

The Diary of "Helena Morley" is a small part of this prosaic work of ceaseless domestication. The book itself is witty, inconsequential, matter-of-fact, "relatively tame and unfocused" as Elizabeth Bishop admits in her preface. What makes it so fascinating is precisely the fact that it represents, as it were, the opposite process to Márquez's magical synthesis in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Helena says that she wrote to "amuse herself and relieve her feelings. But the ardent terms in which she describes her addiction suggest that she knew only too well that the house, "mama and my aunts were open-mouthed to see how the messages were correct".

These aunts are Helena's mother's sisters, held in check along with their husbands and brothers by her Brazilian grandmother, an unexpectedly indulgent matriarch who schools



C. S. Lewis photographed in 1951 by Norman Parkinson, a portrait included in Norman Parkinson (12pp. £2.95, 090-017 41 9), published with an introduction by Terence Pepper by the National Portrait Gallery in connection with their exhibition of the photographer's work (until October 25).

HUMPHREY CARPENTER (Editor):
The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien
463pp. George Allen and Unwin.
£9.95.
0 04 826005 3

In his inaugural address to the University of Cambridge in 1963, C. S. Lewis remarked that he was a dinosaur, a specimen of "Old Western" man, cut off from his youthful audience by changes of education and sensibility more complete, he believed, than any that had ever happened in the world before. The *Letters* show that Tolkien all his life subscribed to the old convention by which you addressed someone as "Dear Mr X", but then on growing familiarity or friendship went over to "Dear X". Christian names were very rare indeed. Similarly, there is as far as I can see no case of profanity in the whole 463 pages: with one exception. Adolf Hitler did anger Tolkien so far as to be called "rud-dy" - to be specific, "that rud-dy little ignoramus". It is typical (and like the other things mentioned in the last few paragraphs, superficially provocative) that what should have irritated Tolkien about Hitler was his scholarship. It should be mentioned also - since Tolkien has been accused of racism - that in 1938 he wrote a fairly incandescent letter to a prospective German publisher who asked him if he was "of aryan origin": he regretted not being Jewish, which is as close as Tolkien ever came to apostatizing his religion. And yet for all that Hitler and "the Aryans" could do, for all his patriotism and instinct towards instant volunteering, Tolkien through all his Second World War letters to his sons on active service never managed to work up any dislike of the German of the *Delenda est Carthago* style. It was self-evident, to him, that there were orcs on both sides. The wise man simply opposed them; and that included avoiding or-talk, or - if it had to be brought in, as it did in *The Lord of the Rings* here and there - bawdierizing it. Using rude words to avoid being thought nabby-pamby would be mere moral cowardice.

Much the same could be said about sex. There is little of it in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or *The Silmarillion* - just one or two of imagined and technical incest from which all recoil - and not much in the *Letters*. However, the letter just quoted, to Tolkien's son Michael, does try to explain the dangers of love, as Tolkien saw them, and does so with a surprising blend of clear-sightedness and exclusion. Many of the things a modern father might write at all - if he had the face to write at all - are simply not there, while there is a very plain statement that the sexes are, when uncorrupted, monogamous. These four words seem (to "New Western man") to form one of the smallest circles ever written, since any sign of "non-instinctive" behaviour will clearly be characterized by their author as "corrupt", and so not contrary evidence. However, behind that there is a lot of horse-sense. Men can wait, but women can't; youth is too precious to mothers. Economic independence for women "really means economic subservience to male commercial employers". The interests of the sexes are on the whole opposed. All this

may well rasp on modern nerves, both because it sounds so harsh and because the absence of overt sexual reaction may be equated with lack of toughness, lack of virility. However the mix of hard and soft was successful for a very long time. For all the lady's bareness of breast in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the hero to whom she offers herself (in my reading and I think Tolkien's) never feels the temptation of lust at all. But then if he had, neither he nor the poet, nor Tolkien as editor, would have mentioned it. Some things are not said - were not said. The *Letters* show that Tolkien all his life subscribed to the old convention by which you addressed someone as "Dear Mr X", but then on growing familiarity or friendship went over to "Dear X". Christian names were very rare indeed. Similarly, there is as far as I can see no case of profanity in the whole 463 pages: with one exception. Adolf Hitler did anger Tolkien so far as to be called "rud-dy" - to be specific, "that rud-dy little ignoramus". It is typical (and like the other things mentioned in the last few paragraphs, superficially provocative) that what should have irritated Tolkien about Hitler was his scholarship. It should be mentioned also - since Tolkien has been accused of racism - that in 1938 he wrote a fairly incandescent letter to a prospective German publisher who asked him if he was "of aryan origin": he regretted not being Jewish, which is as close as Tolkien ever came to apostatizing his religion. And yet for all that Hitler and "the Aryans" could do, for all his patriotism and instinct towards instant volunteering, Tolkien through all his Second World War letters to his sons on active service never managed to work up any dislike of the German of the *Delenda est Carthago* style. It was self-evident, to him, that there were orcs on both sides. The wise man simply opposed them; and that included avoiding or-talk, or - if it had to be brought in, as it did in *The Lord of the Rings* here and there - bawdierizing it. Using rude words to avoid being thought nabby-pamby would be mere moral cowardice.

Tolkien's prejudices, as revealed in these *Letters*, were cohesive, and cogent, and, further, more accessible to reason (and so less prejudiced) than a good many of those which have taken their place. However, they were once upon a time common. They show him only, like Lewis, as a specimen. One is bound to inquire whether these letters show anything of Tolkien as an individual, and in particular as the remarkably peculiar individual who wrote the most against-the-trend success of several decades, seemingly without progenitor. Here the answers are more puzzling. Tolkien explained himself often enough, and with great clarity; but the clarity depends on knowledge in the questioner which often isn't there. By the end of his life he had all too obviously given up, and concluded a lifetime of lecturing with short notes and soft answers. Can anything be made now of what he said about his own mind and method?

The most revealing remark in the book is in a letter of 1938 to his son Christopher. The latter had just read a paper at St. Anne's College, Ox-

A philologist in purgatory

By T. A. Shippey

his subject being "The history of northern legend as seen in different fashion by Germanic poets and Roman writers". Excellent, said his father, several people "spoke to me of the art with which you made the head-eyed Attila on his couch almost vividly present. Yet oddly, I find the thing that really thrills my nerves is the one you mentioned casually: *atla, atla*. Without those syllables the whole great drama both of history and legend loses savour for me." This is quite as tongue-tied a view of the Fall of the Roman Empire as seeing in the Third Reich a failure of philology. But that really is the way Tolkien's mind worked, and it has a kind of compulsion.

The point is that Attila, like his Huns a byword for mindless ferocity, appears to bear a name of suitable alienness derived from the steppes whence he came. However, as Germanic philologists realized suddenly and to their horror, it might well not even be Hunnish at all, but perfectly good Gothic: *atla* is the Gothic word for "father", and *atila* is a normal diminutive, "little father, daddy". The name and the reputation seem poles apart. Furthermore, the *Chronica* were the people the Huns defeated and expelled and drove west, only to turn and revenge themselves in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains where their king (like Tolkien's Théoden) was trampled in victory by his own cavalry charge. What were they doing calling some "head-eyed" horse-archer "daddy"?

The answer is a complex one. Obviously some Goths changed sides. To them Attila, for all his ferocity, must have seemed a good master, a ring-giver, a provider of loot. This also explains the double tradition of Germanic legend, in part of which (like the Old Norse *Atla-vitha*) "Atli" appears as a traitor and tyrant, while other parts (like the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*) retain a softer spot for him. The variant allows one to guess at the different circumstances of origin, and, even more exciting, at the lost tales in between, the lays filtering their way through the forests of Germany and the "pathless Mirkwood" to Scandinavia, the tales exchanged, perhaps, between men of the Crimean Gothic survivor-kingdom and the Varangian Guards in Constantinople. But all these vistas of age and loss and memory rest on a pin-point: on *atla, atla*. That is the way Tolkien saw things all his life. In the letter just quoted he says, I am sure with absolute truth, that if you wanted to know what *The Lord of the Rings* was "about", it was "an effort to create a situation in which a common greeting would be *elen sîn timen omentielmo*". It is an attitude more or less immune to literary criticism, but neither inexplicable nor unshared.

The best bits of these *Letters* are accordingly those where Tolkien writes about language, especially about phonology and about semantic change. Sometimes he concentrates on English, discussing with one correspondent the reasons why "giddy" and "dizzy" are related to "god" and *deus*. Sometimes he comments on his own invented languages, translating previously inexplicable bits, explaining why he wanted Quenya to have

the feel of Finnish and Sindarin the matter as the contrast between Welsh. On at least one occasion he turns briskly to attacks on his own style as archaic, and with scornful ease rewrites a speech from Théoden in perfect demotic English. Does that sound better, he inquires? Of course not. It comes out deeply false and hypocritical, "an insincerity of thought, a disunion of word and meaning. For a King who spoke in a modern style would not really think in such terms at all, and any reference to sleeping quietly in his grave would be a deliberate occasion of expression on his part (however worded) far more bogus than the actual 'archaic' English that I have used". Style confines meaning. If you want to get outside the surprisingly small area of approved modern thoughts, the "bottle" of social conditioning, you will have to write some other way. Tolkien knew that what he was doing was artificial - all his fiction, as he said, would have been better in Elvish - but he trusted to his ear and his special knowledge. Complaints about his style, one sees, may be justified; but they have mostly been deeply ignorant.

The comic thread running through this collection comes indeed from Tolkien's outbursts of disbelief and rage at the awful rubbish thrust at him by translators, adapters, cartoon-makers and the BBC. How could anyone conceivably translate "Mountains of Lune" into "Maan-borgen" (Swedish for "Moon Mountain"). Lune is French for "moon", but that's French not English. Did they think the Vale of Lune was in Picardy? Why have the orcs (in a cartoon) got beaks and feathers? Are they thinking of *auks*? What is a Christmas tree doing on the cover of *The Hobbit*? Tolkien obviously thought, sometimes, that he had died and been condemned to

a purgatorial madhouse. The truth of the matter, as the contrast between his fiction and the criticism of it reveals - is that in the Anglo-Saxon world awareness of language has never been strong and grew inconceivably weaker during his lifetime. It has produced the present situation where people with good English de-grees are more likely to know nothing about words than are (Tolkien's example) postmen, especially Welsh postmen.

This awareness clearly grew on Tolkien with the years, especially after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*. Much of his correspondence after that shows him trying, often vainly, to find simpler or more thorough ways of saying what he had said already. He did not always put what he had written, no doubt reflecting "there's none so dead as those that will not hear". He was also strongly aware of the dangers of trying to explain what was meant by a work of art, though he did try it from time to time. Some of his remarks would not have occurred to me: that Bombadil, for example, is an exemplar of "the spirit that desires knowledge of other things... because they are other". Some of them I find hard to believe for instance that *The Lord of the Rings* is not about power - he charged his mind over this - but about death and immortality. And there is not a lot of information to be gleaned from these pages about *The Silmarillion* as it was finally supposed to be.

On *The Lord of the Rings*, though, there is a good deal of explication which admirers will find useful. The pessimism, or perhaps better, the awareness of sacrifice in the story is pointed out in letter after letter; Tolkien was clearly nettled by Edwin Muir's assertion in a review that everyone recovered at the end and

JOAN OF ARC The Image of Female Heroism Marina Warner

Shows brilliantly how Joan fits into the intellectual and emotional tradition of European thought concerning women

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- New York Times Book Review

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Present Past

The jasmine tea we brought in lilac tin
He glanced at - let her set on oak chest top -
With dried lizard eye - below the Tintoretto,
Seigneur to our serf, remote, a count indeed,
And listened bored to a language he could not
Would not
Understand.
Contemplating life in a remote Angola mill,
Ancestral glories when Medici favoured,
The indignation caused by best Asiam
As the dark hours passed
Ponderous, alone.

Thomas Hinde

Lorien returned to its "ageless felicity", when anyone who read the story at all could see that its inhabitants had condemned their own race and ambitions to death. So, Tolkien repeatedly pointed out that Frodo and Bilbo were not taken over to immortality, but to see if they could be cured before they died, that Frodo "apostrophized" even "ruined" in the Sammath Naur, though no one should blame him without recalling the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"; that Gollum tried to repent, only to be stopped, unwittingly and unintentionally, by Sam. His readers were (often) too soft, Tolkien thought. They wanted to be assured that Right was mightier than Might, and they thought he'd said so when he hadn't. On the other side adherents of modern literature often looked to him like defeatists. If Right wasn't going to win they were prepared to ditch it and be "realistic" instead. Between these alternatives "Old Western man" inched along the lightroom, trying to be "cheerful" and "sad" at once (Tolkien knew the history of these words), trying to win wars but not hate Germans, explaining things for the hundredth time and being called "professorial". "A great life", as they say, "if you don't weaken".

There are other *leitmotifs* in this collection, like the predictable and Bombadil-like fascination with natural objects, lengthily described - hountrout, mountains, trees, daisies - or the strange difficulties Tolkien experienced in getting things finished off. From a very early period he was apologizing for missed deadlines, and several of the things he promised have never come out at all (all the

work on the *Annals Rive*, for one). But the overall picture that emerges is the same as the fiction. Tolkien meant what he wrote deeply. In the end he did not think that he wrote it, not all by himself, and he was very pleased when someone told him so. He also thought that the completely unexpected success of his work showed that ears, or at least untrained ears, were not deaf after all. Maybe philology would not stay on the academic scrapheap, and maybe the beliefs of "the rat-land of the Shire" and "the downland West" were no deadlier than the Voice of Sauron found.

It is hard for a later generation to be so sanguine - Samsons can look back "in calm of mind, all passion spent", but Davids squaring up to Goliaths probably find it harder - but at any rate one can hope. Possibly Tolkien's subject may revive, lose its taint of abstruseness, achieve that "neighbourliness of linguistic and literary studies" which he thought could never be forfeited "without loss to both". Possibly that dissociation of sensibility which Tolkien and Lewis placed in their own youth and ascribed to the car, the radio, the aeroplane and the machine-gun may lose its compulsion. At any rate the *Letters* have collected and selected by Humphrey Carpenter give one not just the record of a personality, but the record of a personality thinking and brooding over material which it understood incomparably well and which it genuinely believed much more interesting and important than itself. Tolkien was a modest man. Also - and this is the surprise of the *Letters* - an extrovert, for all his decades of silence and preparation.

Imagination in isolation

By Peter Bland

CHARLES BRASCH: *The Universal Dance*. A Selection from the Critical Prose Writings. Edited by J. L. Watson. 232pp. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, \$25NZ. 0 908569 26 2

Charles Brasch's critical influence on New Zealand writing made itself felt mainly through his editing of the quarterly magazine *Landfall* from 1947 to 1966. *Landfall* is still going strong under the editorship of Peter Smart, and remains - along with Robin Dudding's *Islands* - the most substantial of the local literary magazines.

For many younger writers Brasch was a hard man to get to know, but his generosity in time and money - was overwhelming. He felt himself isolated (in an already isolated country) by both his intellect and his material good fortune, and his emotional reticence was perhaps a form of self-protection, a way of "being fair" to the legions of budding "talents" seeking sponsorship and approval. This same distancing is noticeable in his prose. He remains, at all times, dedicated to the highest ideals of artistic endeavour. Unfortunately, in a developing literature, a lot of otherwise energetic writing falls well below such standards, and the increasing complexity of sorting out the "ideal" from what might appear to be merely pragmatic resulted in growing tensions in Brasch's thinking. His early 1950s judgments (excellent notes on Sargison and the painter Colin McCahon) seem generally better than his later appreciations of the growing American influence on New Zealand letters. His tastes are distinctly "classical" and his tone, as J. L. Watson points out, "is controlled and temperate with a certain high seriousness". To read his prose is to be reminded of critics like Shelley, Arnold and Eliot. Watson warns us that "These great names might seem to deflate Brasch... but they do, in the end, seem appropriate because they remind us of his breadth of learning and closeness to the central tradition of English letters".

Watson has done an excellent job in bringing together the best of Brasch's critical writing, including his *Landfall* notes, his fine essay on the creative act, *Present Company*, and several previously unpublished talks well worth saving.

Two main themes recur: first, Brasch's obsession (it amounts to that) with the creative act itself - the "Universal Dance" of the book's title; and, second, his watchfulness for anything truly indigenous that might appear on the New Zealand literary scene. He saw New Zealanders as "children of the western world" who, because of their isolation, had to make "a proportionately greater imaginative effort to realize why we are". He recognizes that the greatest danger to the creative process in New Zealand is "the pressure to conform, socially and intellectually... We are afraid of being different". He sees in the "cobbers and pals" syndrome a superficial tendency to "display our bodies freely" while at the same time keeping a closed mind.

There's something of the puritan at James K. Baxter for the latter's rather flashy sexual innuendo in his *Pig Island Letters*. It isn't, of course, always necessary to be suspicious of the flesh while berating a closed mind. He undervalues the informality and lack of class-consciousness in many aspects of New Zealand society. In his tremendous concern for literary standards he criticizes universities for allowing English degrees to be taken without a foreign language, but there have been several bright, underprivileged "pompoms" who were grateful for the opportunity to pursue their interests unhindered by such restrictions. Still, one of the great merits of this book is the opportunity it gives us to continue arguing with Brasch over such issues.

As J. L. Watson acutely points out, Brasch's own poetry was rarely "a dance". It had other more austere and lonely qualities. But in his view of the creative act as the ultimate and highest means of human communication, Brasch took his own thinking beyond the merely parochial. A final word of thanks is due to the University of Otago Press; this is a well-made book, solid, well edited, and a pleasure to handle.

Notes of enjoyment

By Anthony Burgess

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE: *Words and Music*. 280pp. Collins, £9.95.

On his sixtieth birthday, as C. V. Wedgwood reminds us, a plaque was put up in honour of Philip Hope-Wallace in El Vino's in Fleet Street, a journalists' boozer he graced with his casual eloquence and wit. He was one of those rare writers who write as they speak; his opera and theatre notices were delivered over the telephone and, in the following morning's paper, they appeared as palpable records of a tone of voice. He was best when not too much breath was required, and he never thought of writing a book. Two years after his death his sister has collected some of his pieces - a very small number when you consider that he wrote regularly for more than forty years - and the record is now a kind of album of those admired and loved tonalities, no longer limited to an inch or an hour.

Having just finished the three recently published volumes of Shaw's music criticism, reviewing the foot of her rather than his, I am drawn both to commiserate with and to admire journalists like Hope-Wallace, forced into mean compression and yet discovering an art in short-windedness. To be epigrammatically dismissive, like Dorothy Parker with "The House Beautiful" is the play lousy, is unworthy. Moreover, there was little acid in Hope-Wallace, and his forte, rather like that of Tynan, was finding a crisp poetry of adulation. Writing of Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, he says: "The music is never more ethereal than in this: that it seems

detached from the players in the pit". With *Billy Budd* he finds "serenity in the music", though, alas, not on the sombre stage. He sums up Gielgud's *Hamlet* thus: "Man, the best possible instrument, is finally unequal to circumstance. What piece of work is man, and how inadequate". Comparing Gielgud and Olivier as Lear, he says: "Comparisons are odious, but like much that is odious very interesting".

Hope-Wallace was a great man for the flavours of things, especially times and places - a boyhood in Rouen (which turned him into as much a Frenchman as James Agate, though a much nicer one); the reopening of the Royal Opera House in 1946, Paris, the night of the Coronation - but he found the vital atar in the theatre and, after Shaw, was the one journalist who was equally at home with the drama and the opera. He recognized that you could not make a theatrical aesthetic out of studying a text or a score; if a thing worked, in words or music, it was good. The sung and the spoken arts had both to be assessed in those same terms, and he was not one to reject Gounod's *Faust* because it was more kitsch than Goethe (Veronica Wedgwood says: "He was one of the few English critics who really knew his Goethe").

He quotes Beethoven with approval: "I would give the whole of the Brandenburg Concertos for *Manon* and would think I had vastly profited by the exchange". He means Massenet, not Puccini: Puccini did not capture the essential Frenchness of the story. Hope-Wallace stuck to his adoration of Massenet in the face of great British scorn. "... The mere mention of his name in my own country was enough to set the table in a roar; to make lady members of the Bach choir turn pink with disapproval; to induce apoplexy in the

most bloodless cathedral organist". It is bloodlessness that Hope-Wallace is against. He loves the human voice as a kind of exquisite carnality, and he worships the great divas. He celebrates Muggie Teyte's eightieth birthday in a fine paragraph:

Jean de Reszke kept her singing *Depuis le jour* daily (perfect for head tone and pianissimo). Debussy couldn't quite believe the sight of her (perhaps he was expecting someone heavier). He kept staring at her suspiciously. "Vous êtes bien Mlle Maggie Teyte de l'Opéra Comique?" He pronounced Maggie with soft g's like the Italian soup cubes. Always her sense of humour was tart and dominant. During the blitz at one of those National Gallery concerts, with Gerald Moore accompanying, was shattered the spell of a *Faure* song with the announcement: "Dance. Start again. I swallowed my eyelashes".

As for the art he practised, it was typical of him to deplore the pejorative employment of "criticism" in demotic speech. "Real criticism is eight per cent adulation, ten per cent cautious disapproval, still less scolding or derision". The days when Shaw could describe a singer ready for "Ocean, thou mighty monster" "looking as if she had already swallowed it in the green room" are, according to Hope-Wallace, out. He says this with a regret perhaps not wholly sincere. His instinct was to enjoy, not to carp, and these snippets of genuine criticism formed but never blazed, coming to the three hundredth *Madame Butterfly* where the beasts in the first night are instinct with the voice of enjoyment. This is a fine book: he might have been wittily surprised at its having written it.

The sharp Etonian eye

By Alan Bell

DAVID NEWSOME (Editor): *Edwardian Excursions*. From the Diaries of A. C. Benson 1898-1904. 190pp. John Murray, £12.50. 0 7195 3769 X

David Newsome's *On the Edge of Paradise* gave a full introduction to A. C. Benson's life through his manuscript diary preserved in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge. He now turns to his earlier volumes for a series of long extracts covering some of Benson's vacation activities during his last years as an Eton master, before he settled in Cambridge as a don and man of letters, devoting his literary talents to the lucrative but undemanding lower-middle reading public and his romantic yearnings to the better-looking youth of the university. The earlier diaries seem oddly timeless (helped by some of Benson's expressions - "sate", "skit", "manufactory") and the selection has the air of a book for the country-house guest-room. It is appropriately insubstantial (and, especially when compared with the 400 larger pages of the *Paradise* book, alarmingly expensive), but it does succeed in giving us some representative passages of Benson at his true length.

His quality as an observer is well brought out, particularly the peculiar social position that he occupied as an upper-middle-class academic, enabled by his Etonian and archiepiscopal connections to move freely in aristocratic and Court circles - and finding himself more attracted to them than he usually liked to admit, even when commenting on their stuffiness, philistinism and formality.

His eye was sharp, and during this early period his pen was being sharpened by practice with telling, but sometimes rather too easy, similes that were to characterize his later journalizing at Cambridge. Eating an

overlarge peach was "as if I were biting into a baby's skull". Kempe's stained glass depicts "rabbit-faced people in carpets, and angels with ragged wings"; another don, met in Court circles, is "like a damaged Dickens". He is able to give subliminal glimpses of his subjects, like the flash of the peacocks' mirrors checking the fit of their coronets at the coronation of Edward VII. It was there that he noticed their husbands:

It was now exactly like the garden-party in *Alice in Wonderland* - the business-like peers had gone, but the rest evidently yielded to the irresistible desire to prance and pace and mince and look magnificent, reading admiration in each other's eyes. The coronets were truly absurd - so big, like battered hats and so unreal looking. The peers who took them off looked well.

State occasions, such as the Coronation, Gladstone's funeral, or a visit to the Vice-Regal Lodge at Dublin (where Benson found himself at a disadvantage, having taken a Hamburg and not a top hat) occupy about half the book; they are observed with a shade less disrespect than Benson perhaps wished to convey. A Christmas party at Claremont with his former pupil the Duke of Albany (newly of Coburg), and the dreary Germanic horseplay ("the odd fondness that Royalty have for 'ragging' other people and laughing at their discomfort, when they are sure they will never be made to look foolish themselves") is recorded in detail; but he decides that the "atmosphere of false deference and elaborate ceremony" is not for him.

Better, perhaps, were the long, idyllic trips in summer vacations, to Cambridgeshire, Norfolk or Gloucestershire (where Broadway became the Upton of his *Letters*), redolent of Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers, breeches and bicycle - or later of the motor-car, and the not unwelcome attention the hissing and snorting new carriage attracted in country towns. There was church-visiting, but

never in a merely archaological, M. R. James-ish way: places were to be appreciated for their human associations. "This barnacle-like incrustation of human interest is what gives such a place its catholicity of charm". Benson noted at Ely, and "antiquity, combined with beauty - mellow mouldering age" was much desired, often producing a hyperaesthetic rhapsody that is very much of its period. Charm in individuals and in their special appeal for him, and A. J. Balfour is well portrayed in his domestic surroundings at Whittingham.

Literary judgments are delivered with the smart briskness of a clever schoolmaster rather than the more considered finality of Benson's later critical manner. The exception here is the long account of a visit to Swinburne, interviewed while Benson was working on the English *Letters* *Rossetti*; it is already known from Percy Lubbock's earlier and more circumspect selection from the Diary, but it well deserved republication. Every detail of the *French ménage* is recorded, and - as one might expect - it is Walter Dutton who steals the show:

I can't understand this English - how this egotistical, ill-bred, little man can have established such relations with Rossetti and Swinburne. There must be something fine about him, and his extraordinary kindness is perhaps the result. But his talk, his personal habits (dripping moustache etc) and his egotism would grate on me at every hour of the day. And yet he is a hero of friendship" said Rossetti.

MARINA WARNER:

Joan of Arc
The Image of Female Heroism
349pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £9.95.
0 297 77638 X

The medieval Church distrusted visionaries, with reason. Receiving their revelations directly from God they challenged the traditional lines of authority. And they presented intractable problems of recognition. Charlatans and fanatics were not easily distinguished from men inspired; then, if they were indeed inspired, was it by God? When the line which separated heresy from enthusiasm was so narrow, there were bound to be many who, like Francis of Assisi, were venerated as saints but might quite as easily have been condemned as heretics. Joan of Arc fell on the other side of the line, and has the unique distinction of being the only saint whom the Catholic church has both burned and canonized.

The career by which she earned this distinction began with her arrival at the Dauphin's court at Chinon in February 1429 to announce that she was sent by God to relieve Orléans (then besieged by an English army) and to lead the Dauphin to his coronation at Rheims. That she obtained an audience was certainly remarkable, although it was not miraculous as some of her admirers have suggested. Joan was more than a simple peasant. She was the daughter of a substantial tenant farmer at the margins of Champagne, and she was above minding the beasts in the fields as she made quite clear to the interrogators at her trial. She could dictate, although not write, a good letter. She came with an introduction from the commander of the royal castle at Vaucouleurs near her home. And she had a self-confidence which compelled belief.

The Dauphin was just the man to believe her. Charles VII was a man of intense, brooding piety whose own interest in occult prophecy earned him polite rebukes from senior clergymen at his court. Joan was at least as plausible as some of the astrologers, prognosticators and quacks whom Charles kept about him and whom, says the Burgundian chronicler Chastellain, he "often consulted and firmly believed". The principal accusation against Joan at her trial, that she had set herself up as a prophet, was undoubtedly true and was probably what commended her to the Dauphin. Prophecies of the salvation of France by a virgin had been current for a number of years. Joan had certainly heard of them, and probably Charles had too. Other visionaries with very similar messages had gained the Dauphin's ear by very similar means, and one of the stigmatized shepherds from Gevaudan called William, was to displace Joan in his esteem within months of his coronation. These eccentrics and misfits differed from Joan only in being failures.

What was remarkable about Joan was not that she was a prophet, nor that her prophecies gained an audience in the peculiar atmosphere of early fifteenth-century France. It was that the more significant of her predictions came true. In May 1429, Orléans was duly relieved. In July the Dauphin was crowned at Rheims after a short campaign in which the English army, commanded by Talbot and Fastolf, had been defeated in the field for the first time in recent memory.

From a strictly military point of view these campaigns were flashes in the pan, Joan was a mediocre strategist and her sole notion of tactics was to charge head-on. When she freed herself of the tutelage of Charles's professional generals and moved from the rear to the van, the results were not impressive. She attempted to storm Paris on Our Lady's birthday, a shocking sacrilege and a military failure. Left by a penitential Charles VII to her own devices she

Marching with the Maid

By Jonathan Sumption

became a freelance warlord. But she failed to take La Charité-sur-Loire in November 1429, failed at Lagny in the following April, and was captured in May in a skirmish outside Compiègne. Her captors sold her to the English for 10,000 crowns.

The significance of Joan's brief career was psychological, not military. It brought to an end an almost unbroken run of English victories which had begun at Agincourt in 1415. In contemporary eyes these victories were the best possible evidence of divine favour. The disinclination of the Dauphin by his father in favour of Henry V and his heirs had plainly been justified in retrospect, even if it was not justified by the Dauphin's implication in the murder of the Duke of Burgundy in 1419. Although French historians generally deny it, there is little doubt that in the large part of France which Henry V controlled his rule enjoyed the support of most of the population, and so, at first, did the nominal rule by his infant son. Of the 131 members of the tribunal which condemned Joan of Arc, only eight were Englishmen and of these only two were regular participants.

Without this support the task of Henry VI's government in ruling an alien kingdom would have been impossible, and indeed after Joan's adventure it gradually became impossible. The Duke of Bedford, who ruled in Henry's name, knew this well. Much later, when the territorial losses of the English in 1429 had been largely made good, he reported to the home government that there had fallen at Orléans

... as it seemeth a great stroke upon your people that was assembled there in great number, caused in part as I trow of lack of sad belief and unfaithful doubt that they had of a disciple and limb of the fiend called the Pucelle that used false enchantments and sorcery, the which great stroke and discomfiture not only lessened in great part the number of your people there but as well withdrew the courage of the remnant in marvelous wise and encouraged your adverse party and enemies to assemble them forthwith in great number.

Joan could have been locked up as a prisoner of war, quietly disposed of in a secular prison, or thrown into the Seine in a sack like William the Shepherd when the English finally caught him too. She was tried for heresy and sorcery by an ecclesiastical tribunal because it was necessary to show that her victories were the work of Satan, not of God.

In this sense the condemnation of Joan of Arc was a political act. But it was not a political tribunal which pronounced it. When all life was lived in a framework of religious belief, ecclesiastical and nonconformity were apt to seem impious even when they were harmless, which Joan's were not. Her career had been extraordinary. Her opinions were unconventional. On some matters, such as the authority of the Church which she rejected in principle; they were plainly heretical. Joan gave her judges plenty of material with which to destroy her, and at least one of them stoutly maintained twenty years later when he was living in a reunited French kingdom that Joan had been a fraud. She was "subtle, with a woman's subtlety".

This tells us as much about Joan's judges as it does about Joan herself: their ideas about what behaviour was seemly, and what was so eccentric as to lie outside the pale of shared values which defined a Christian community in the opinion of educated Frenchmen in the fifteenth century. And not only those of them who supported the cause of Henry VI. Prophecy was dangerously close to sorcery and the authority of the Church mattered on both sides of the political boundary. The guidance of unprompted visions might be sought in an emergency, but they were not the means of recovery in the longer term. Regnault de Char-

ties, the archbishop of Rheims who crowned Charles in Joan's presence in 1429, was certainly not the only dignitary on Charles's side who thought the Maid presumptuous and misguided even if she was also useful. God suffered her to be captured, he told his dioceses, for her overweening pride and her obstinacy in following her own will in place of God's commands. This was almost certainly one reason why Charles VII made no attempt to ransom or release her.

Joan's own personality cannot now be retrieved from the glutinous varnish of five centuries of hagiography. Even her own words, recorded more or less verbatim in a substantial volume of transcripts of her cross-examination at Rouen, reflect the questions which were put to her, and therefore the preconceived notions of her interrogators. What can be retrieved is the image which Joan left with her contemporaries. Since she had prevailed by bluff in her lifetime (and, a cynic might add, after her death), the image was perhaps more important than the reality.

It is the image which is the subject of Marina Warner's interesting but eccentric book. Those who want to know the order of events will have to consult the rather sketchy chronological table at the beginning of the text or, for want of anything better, the orthodox biography by Régine Pernoud. Here they will discover why Joan was admired and why she was rejected; in particular (the author's words) "how Joan fitted into an intellectual and emotional tradition of thought concerning women".

In the second half of her book Miss Warner traces the secular and religious cult of Joan of Arc through five centuries in which enthusiasm for a variety of causes have claimed Joan of Arc for their own: French nationalists, anti-Semites, right-wing monarchists, agrarian socialists, Catholic revivalists. The process has always involved an element of anachronism, and in claiming Joan for the feminist movement Miss Warner follows in the same tradition. Feminist history is open to the same objections as patriotic history, Marxist history, or literary history written under the influence of enthusiasm for a variety of causes have claimed Joan of Arc for their own: French nationalists, anti-Semites, right-wing monarchists, agrarian socialists, Catholic revivalists. The process has always involved an element of anachronism, and in claiming Joan for the feminist movement Miss Warner follows in the same tradition.

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One can only speculate about what would have happened if she had been a man. It seems unlikely that she would have been put to death and almost certain that she would have been spared a lengthy trial by the Inquisition beforehand. If a man, even one inspired by the conviction of a divine revelation, had had a comparable career, his victories could have been explained by luck or military skill and his work reinforced with the aid of a few reinforcements with the aid of a Parliamentary subsidy. His achievement, falling naturally into the accepted scheme of things, could have been rationally discussed without reference to the miraculous intervention of either God or Satan. But as Bossuet once observed, God acts through the most unlikely agents, so that his own role may be recognized. This was indeed exactly what the Duke of Bedford feared. Joan was condemned because, being a woman, she was an unlikely agent for the defeat of the English armies. That she was a woman was the essence of the matter for her enemies as it was for her friends.

That being so, it is ironic that Joan herself should have abjured her femaleness. Christine de Pisan might proclaim her victories as triumphs of the female sex but Joan would have rejected that notion as, incidentally, she would have rejected the subtle of this book. She was the image of a wholly sexless heroism.

There was, first, her virginity, the one aspect of her personal history which she publicized widely. "La

Pucelle" was a name which she gave herself, and attempts to discredit it failed. The accusation of dissoluteness, freely made in English and Burgundian propaganda, does not appear in the condemnation of 1431 and was not pressed at the trial. Although described as pretty, she was clearly not feminine. She was a virago. Several witnesses who gave evidence at her posthumous retrial in the 1450s remarked on a forbidding manner which repelled any kind of sexual attraction. Her equerry said:

Although she was a pretty and shapely young girl, and although in arming her he had often seen her breasts and occasionally her legs naked... he had never experienced the slightest carnal desire for her and neither had any of her other equerries or servants as he had often heard them say so.

Some of these others gave the same evidence in their own words. Due allowance must be made for the traditional stereotypes of the medieval cult of saints, which expected sexlessness both in men and women. Both Joan herself at the time and the witnesses at the posthumous retrial twenty-five years later must have been influenced by powerful conventional notions about what made a pure life. More interesting, because it involved a striking departure from the stereotype, was Joan's adoption of male costume.

As Miss Warner points out, this was not wholly unprecedented, but she exaggerates the importance of the precedents. They were few, ancient, and concerned fictional saints whose cult was very limited. Moreover, the rejection of female costume by such female paragons as Thecla in the apocryphal second-century *Acts of Saint Paul* involved (as Miss Warner also points out) rejection of the luxury and comfort associated with a woman's clothing and hair-style. Joan, by comparison, wore male clothes of great magnificence including the splendid surcoat by which she was caught at Compiègne.

This was profoundly shocking for her contemporaries. It features in no less than five of the charges brought against Joan at her trial and aroused misgivings among her most ardent supporters. Even without the stern stipules and distortions by questionable principles of selection. At least in Miss Warner's case the principles of selection are overt and allowance can be made for them. Besides, Joan's femaleness matters.

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have worn them in battle is unsurprising. But she also wore them for the journey to Chinon in February 1429 and throughout her imprisonment after May 1430. Indeed, she declined an offer to allow her to hear Mass in prison if she resumed a woman's dress. "She had rather die than go back on something that had been done at God's command". "Through her transvestism", Miss Warner suggests, "she abrogated the destiny of womanhood. She could thereby transcend her sex: she could set herself apart and usurp the privileges of the male and his claims to superiority".

If Miss Warner were right in her view that "the issues of feminism were alive in the fifteenth century as they never were again until the late eighteenth century and the present day", there might be something to be said for the view that Joan was ventilating those issues at her trial; although not much when one remembers the backwardness of an upbringing at the far end of Champagne. But the truth is that the dominant position of men was not even questioned in the fifteenth century, and the only evidence which is offered to the contrary is the defence of womanhood by Christine de Pisan and Jean Gerson against the cheapening effect of erotic literature of the period. This is as far from women's liberation as Mary Whitehouse is from Germaine Greer.

That Joan's superiors and judges were men was too obvious and too natural a fact for Joan to contemplate demonstrating against it, and nothing in her career suggests any reason why she should wish to. On the road to Chinon her costume was presumably play-acting. In Rouen castle it was the only remaining symbol of her brief period of glory, her "specialness" as Miss Warner puts it. In a woman as proud of her achievement and as certain of its spiritual meaning as Joan was, this was enough to justify her refusal to discard it.

It is now sixty years too late to point out that this serene confidence that she was sent by God was as much the result of Joan's achievements as the cause of them, and that her belief in her "voices" was quite as effective as the reality of them. She was canonized in 1920 after a relentless campaign by the French ecclesiastical hierarchy which was as political in its inspiration as her trial and execution. The Devil's Advocate had pointed out that not all greatness came from God. Joan, he concluded, was one of those who, like Christopher Columbus, had done remarkable things, but it was far from clear that she had done them in God's name. A Protestant Englishman may properly agree.

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Edinburgh: revivals of the revue ...

By Harold Hobson

Fringe Theatre
Edinburgh Festival

When Tavaré was battling in a desperate situation in England's first innings in the fourth Test, he was continually barracked by an impatient crowd. Tavaré did not vary the pace of his implacable stone-balling, and when he reached fifty the fickle onlookers gave him a very respectable cheer. On such occasions it is customary for a batsman to show some appreciation of the applause by lifting his bat or touching his cap. Tavaré did neither; he made no acknowledgement that the crowd so much as existed, ending no more for his praise than he had appeared to do for its abuse. If Coriolanus had played cricket, it is the contemptuous and magnificent way he would have played it. At the Edinburgh Fringe there is no Coriolanus; only, in fact, the mob.

There are over 400 Fringe companies in Edinburgh, and there are not enough audiences to go round. Some productions, like John McGrath's *The Cuch*, which is about the sad plight of the Hebridean herring industry, and which is being presented at the Moray House Theatre by the Scottish 7:84 Company, are assured of large audiences because of the excellence of the author's work. *The Cuch* (St Mary's Hall), which is the Edinburgh Footlights latest revue, is certain of being packed out because of the excellent work of its uncensored. But these are exceptions in a waste of shame. There is a nasty and bitter spirit this year in the Fringe, bred of deep jealousy and widespread failure. Members of some companies attend the performances of their rivals, and ostentatiously walk out within a few minutes of their beginning. They hear down casters' posters, or cover them with graffiti. Many of the companies which came here with high hopes went home after playing for a few nights to audiences of three or four.

One has sympathy for these disappointed spirits, but not too much. With a few not always successful exceptions, Fringe companies have a lamentable notion of what constitutes modern theatre. Intellectually, they live in the land of their parents, not realizing that productions of plays like *Waiting for Godot* or Brecht's *Private Life of the Master Racer* seem to a contemporary critic about as ancient as the Pentland Hills. In the 1930s there was a very popular form of entertainment called revue. It consisted of a series of songs and dances interspersed with sketches, and brought in a lot of topical references. In London revues are nowadays seen more rarely than moons made of green cheese. But on the Edinburgh Fringe they are as frequent as the rain. Oxford and Cambridge seem to be everywhere; other revues come from Bristol, Aberdeen, Bath, Sheffield, and one of them is enthralling known as *Bosoms* (best of Southampton's Old Medical Shows). In more than fifty presentations this quavering form of art still bravely raises its withered head and shakes its tottering legs. It is a kind of show that is about as much fun as reading forty years' old volumes of the *Tatler*. Well, I must not exaggerate - almost as much fun. That is what the late-night theatre-gor gets at the Edinburgh Fringe.

There is better stuff earlier on. Recently, left-wing dramatists have been showing signs of misgiving. Brecht's *Thirteenth Night* appeared alarmed that the socialist dream might become a nightmare. Ken Campbell's production of *The War with the Mews* suggested that if we treated the Third World with sympathy it would eventually rise and destroy us. John

McGrath himself wrote an excellent play called *Down in the Wind* (produced at the Edinburgh Festival in 1971) in which I thought that the pure language of revolution was flickering slightly. Now, in *The Cuch*, he beholds an old paradise in the Hebrides being murdered by capitalist greed and capitalist fears of war; he looks back on it through a haze of poetry and memories of J. M. Barrie.

McGrath's technique is based on the music hall (yes, yes, of course I know that music halls are even older than revue and quite a different thing), but it gives him wonderful chances, with a few strips of painted cardboard, to summon up visions of a coach party, an aeroplane, and a dinghy rocking on a stormy sea, as well as a darkling glen backed by the sun setting over the quiet, misty coast. It is here that his heroine, played rather beautifully by Mary Ann Coburn as a girl who has just come over from Blackpool, wistfully looks at a vision and a longing not very different from that of a young girl in Mary's *Recess*, and Simon McKean, piloting the girl and her husband across the waters, sings a threnody on the decline of the herring industry that floods the heart with sadness and a melancholy joy, which spills over into a mournful dignity in the antiphony of Mr McGrath's lamentation on the effects of germ warfare. If you miss seeing *The Cuch* your life will be the poorer for it ever afterwards.

And it will be poorer, too, if you miss Charles Lewsen's solo performance of his new play, *In the Seventh Circle*, at the Matthew Hall in St Margaret's School. It is probably the latest thing in the entire Festival, whether official or Fringe; a stupendous presentation, subtle, heart-rending and tragic, of a battle in one man's mind that brings self-inflicted damnation of the soul through, paradoxically, the excessive sincerity of religious faith. Robert Fitzroy had been captain of HMS Beagle on the famous voyage which was rich in the discoveries that led one of its passengers, Charles Darwin, to lay Victorian Christianity in ruins; and in making those discoveries, Robert Fitzroy assisted him. When Darwin later published *The Origin of Species*, Fitzroy realized, in the full glory of a divided mind, just precisely what he had done: he had helped to pull out the foundation stone of the building in which he sheltered from the fear of death.

Lewsen begins very quietly by murmuring to himself the words that enable Sydney Carton to summon up the courage to lay his head on the guillotine: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Carton repeated those words to himself as he paced the streets of Paris all through the night that preceded his death; and in Lewsen's portrayal of Fitzroy they continue to ring ever louder and louder, in greater and greater doubt, as he imagines to himself that he is being tried before the court of God. The pain, the anxiety, the watchfulness in his face as he seeks, with always diminishing hope, some sign of possible salvation and forgiveness; the marvellous ease with which he can change a voice that is sometimes no more than a whisper to something that sounds as frightening as the trumpets of all the angels demanding his condemnation; the skill with which he shows the acuity of systematic argument persisting even through the transcending madness which leads him to cut his throat with the razor which he has held open in his hand from the moment of his entrance upon the stage; the strangeness, the sadness, the passion, and the very importance of the theological and scientific arguments so exactly and so exactly delivered - these are sledge-hammer blows to the human heart.

Earlier in the evening at the Matthew Hall a group called "the Circle" present a play by their worthy leader James Marriott. It is called *Voyages from a Black Room*, and it shows the dark night of the soul after the chief character's girlfriend has been killed in a car accident. Jay Jopling gives an engine-throbbing performance as the bereaved hero and Madeleine Gould's ghost-girl is a veritable Ophelia.

This dark night of the soul business is pretty strong at this Festival. I cannot help but think that this is what the new Oxford University Theatre Group revue, *A Touch of the Bizarre*, is after. It sees the universe as essentially evil; abounding in vices and wickedness, even its kindnesses are cruel; and the characteristically sketch is one that shows Margaret Thatcher being christened by Satan. It tries to put substance into the flimsy fabric of revue, and it should draw crowds of those devotees of advanced drama who believe that entertainment is an improper word. The Cambridge revue, *The Cuch*, is just about the most entertaining, the most delightful, the most

thoroughly good-time show that I have seen for years. It is this, I think, that has given Cambridge's intellectual reputation, I can only hope that their dons will get up some new row about structuralism to put things right again. *The Cuch* has only one thing that is, sentimentally, there is no love song in it. Love songs, touching little ditties, tenderly sung, used to be a feature of Cambridge revues. But that was in the days when they had Clive James as manager. He is a tremendous loss to them. He was the Vera Lynn of university revue, and even now, despite his failure as a London actor, Cambridge would do well to re-engage him. His absorption with young girls who had tearfully lost their sweethearts used to make audiences sob, and it is not sufficient consolation that since he left Cambridge revues their satire has enormously improved. In *The Cuch* there is a scorching song about Americans who contribute money to causes which eventually result in the murder of British soldiers in Northern Ireland. This is satire in the grand class, for its lethal blows are delivered with the courtesy of one presenting a bouquet. The

singer, Hugh Laurie, strums a guitar, entirely incorporates himself into the personality of a genial, woolly-minded, generous American gift-giver, and without a word of repugnance, with indeed every sign of friendliness and charm, destroys the man before our eyes. It is a superb execution.

The new play which has received the most enthusiastic praise is from Oxford. It is *Superman on Ice*, by Peter Brett, and it too is presented at St Mary's Street Hall. In a way it brings us back to Coriolanus. Superman, like the ancient doomed Roman, would tower over the whole world, and despise all other men; he has been born in the mind, though, not in purple. Adopted, rejected, jeered at by his school-fellows, scorned, and patronized, he becomes to the best of his small powers, an agent of destruction, which leads the play to a simple, sad and stunning conclusion. Mr Brett writes with great compassion; the play is ingeniously directed by Debbie Shewell, and Jon Harding is remarkable both in Superman's apothecary and in his bullied weakness.

... and clearings in the myth

By Nicholas Phillipson

Art Exhibitions
Edinburgh Festival

Everyone knows about the horrors of Edinburgh's theatres, but not much notice has been taken of the delights of the remarkable gallery boom that has recently taken place in both the public and private sectors. What is exciting about this year's Festival is that the potential in all this new gallery space is now being realized for the first time. For although there is no single exhibition of major importance mounted especially for the Festival, the overall variety and quality of the exhibitions on offer is exceptionally good.

Most of the exhibitions in the public galleries take the form of visiting exhibitions of major works from great collections. Armand Hammer's superb collection of Daumiers is on show at the Royal Scottish Academy (reviewed by Richard Cook in the TLS on August 14) is a prime example. There is also an interesting touring exhibition of American Photography since 1960 from the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the City Art Centre. And there are two absorbing exhibitions of avant-garde art: one, of European work from the Stedelijk Museum, Moenchengladbach, is at the Gallery of Modern Art; the other, of American Abstract Expressionist art, again from the Museum of Modern Art, is on show at the Fruitmarket Gallery and the City Art Centre. Professionals who know the collection well have been a little patronizing about this sort of approach to exhibition-building. But there is surely as much to be gained from seeing the work of a major gallery as from seeing the work of a visiting theatre or opera company.

The Abstract Expressionist exhibition is particularly interesting, not simply because the Museum of Modern Art's collection is matchless but because Abstract Expressionism has been somewhat neglected in this country. Walter D'Amico, the chosen sixty-seven major works by twenty-six artists who belong to the first phase of the movement's history and who produced major work in the 1950s. His selection is designed to introduce the principal figures in the movement, to demonstrate the cen-

tral characteristics of that phase of its development and to point out roots in earlier European art with which we are more familiar. It is beautifully and unpretentiously done, clarifying the language of Abstract Expressionism, throwing into relief the intellectual and imaginative powers of painters like Pollock, Rothko and Motherwell who are, in their own ways, deeply private painters coming to life more readily in each other's company than in the company of painters who do not share their language.

Jon Schueler, an American painter who spends much time in Mallaig and has deep roots in Abstract Expressionism, is on show at Edinburgh University's Talbot Rice Art Centre. Schueler is an accomplished painter with a distinctive manner. Mallaig is his point of reference, as important to his painting as, say, the Spanish Civil War was to Motherwell or Mont Ste Victoire was to Cézanne. In the past, however, Schueler's painting, for all its accomplishment, has never quite managed to escape the charge of sentimentality. He has never managed to find the sort of mythic potential in Mallaig on which Motherwell and Cézanne were able to draw. His images of Mallaig are all too often illustrative, drawn rather than painted, relying on pictorial preoccupations of the Victorian rather than on the formidable intellectual and imaginative demands of abstract expressionism. But this is not an easy exhibition to review: its centrepiece is a series of six huge canvases, elegantly begun, which Schueler is going to complete in public during the Festival.

As always, the private galleries are full of Scottish painting both ancient and modern and as always it makes a flat, depressingly provincial showing. It is interesting to see how much more appetizing nineteenth and early twentieth-century Scottish painting looks, even though few of the painters are individually of particular distinction, when the Fine Art Society knows exactly how to give Victorian and Edwardian Scottish painting its due, and the lesson has not been learned by smaller galleries is well. The Fine Art Society's gallery in Great King Street is a superb early nineteenth-century house, and its Festival exhibition, *The Face of Scotland: the Land and its People*, draws on the own remarkably rich collection. The exhibition shows clearly that this was painting for an opulent, cultured

bourgeoisie which respected craftsmanship and intelligence in its painters and enjoyed familiar images of people and things provided that they were treated critically and freshly. The paintings have been closely and densely hung. They provide a complex variety of images designed to hold the cultural eye for a minute or two. But no longer.

Less fashionable images of Scotland are on offer at *Scottish Myths: an Exploration of Scotchness*, at the Little Lyceum Theatre. *Scottish Myths* is about the creation of popular "distorted" stereotypes of Scotland (but what, one wonders, is a "true" stereotype?). How, the organizers ask, did Scotland become the land of porridge, haggis, whisky and shortbread? How did the archetypal Scotsman become a seedy Highland Lad by Donald McGill or a naive Heilan' Laddie by Mabel Lucie Attwell? What are the cultural roots of the White Heather Club, *Dr Finlay's Casebook* or that sublime epic *Brigadoon*?

These are grave questions and this exhibition is a glorious attempt to clarify them. There is a catalogue full of gems and aperçus, written with wit and patriotic anguish, something for every student of Balmoral to relish. The catalogue actually promises more than a fairly small exhibition can deliver and the authors don't do full justice to the central exhibit. Murray and Barbara Grigor's awesome collection of delightful picture postcards - mostly comic - which come from the great age of the postcard boom, 1900-1914. Here we see the Edwardians had distilled all questions about Scottish history and Scottish culture into one great, all-embracing question: "What does the Highlander wear under his kilt?" At least half of the 3,000 cards in the Grigors' collection are devoted to exploring the Delphic mysteries of the kilt. One card says it all: it is a fully frontal view of a kilt and sporran which, when plucked, releases a long strip of topographical view. The caption says: "A Kilt or the tartan braid and braw! Your heart we auld Scotland will surely draw." But here the catalogue uncharacteristically misleads. It says that these cards finally reveal the mysteries of the kilt. But that is exactly what they don't do. They celebrate a mystery which, if it was ever finally dispelled, would probably cause the myth of Scotland to evaporate like dew on the heather.

The art of assertion

By Michael Mason

Picasso's Picasso
Hayward Gallery

The Picasso show at the Hayward has not, so far, been a success. I gather that the exhibition needs about 3,000 visitors a day to be economically healthy, and it is only attracting about 3,000. By contrast, the display of royal wedding presents is turning out to be the most popular spectacle of the year, or even of recent years, with huge numbers flocking to St James's. What the unexpectedly modest numbers going through the doors of the Hayward suggest is that the general esteem which seems to attach to modern art in this country is in some measure fictitious. Picasso's is among the dozen or so most familiar names in contemporary culture, but this does not mean that he has made objects which are widely liked. The name, but not the work, is familiar. The British public on the whole doesn't care for the art. The taste which is stirred and delighted by the tokens of aristocratic nuptials has resisted, and perhaps resented, innumerable solicitations over the years to be stirred and delighted by the work of Picasso.

But what have these solicitations amounted to? The chorus of critical praise for Picasso may be universal and loud, but it is not harmonious. The public knows of Picasso, and doesn't like him. The critics like him, but for diverse and sometimes incompatible reasons. The gallery visitor who wanted to know why he or she should admire the objects on show at the Hayward would not get a clear answer from the reviews of the show, or the accompanying literature. In other words, there is still an uncertainty or uneasiness, in professional critical opinion taken as a whole, about the nature of Picasso's achievement.

One issue on which the critics are greatly in dispute is that of Picasso's beliefs about mankind and the world (stereotype?). How, the organizers ask, did Scotland become the land of porridge, haggis, whisky and shortbread? How did the archetypal Scotsman become a seedy Highland Lad by Donald McGill or a naive Heilan' Laddie by Mabel Lucie Attwell? What are the cultural roots of the White Heather Club, *Dr Finlay's Casebook* or that sublime epic *Brigadoon*?

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As I walked round the Grand Palais last year, I was filled with a sense of joy which I had not experienced for a long time. Every item in the exhibition, from the tiniest matchstick construction to the largest oil, gave one the sense of perfect realisation. Curiously, I had just been attending the splendid series of concerts given by the London Sinfonietta and the LSO to commemorate Stravinsky, and there too I had sensed just this kind of clarity, wit and humanity in even the tiniest work.

But the case for the "humane" Picasso has also been made by critics who care about this artist. The conflict between their kind of account, and one which stresses the artist's mis-

anthropy or hardness of vision, is respectable. It even surfaces in the catalogue of the Hayward exhibition. Not that Sir Roland Penrose and Tina Hilton directly contradict one another over Picasso's beliefs, but it is clear that they have made different inferences about what these were. Sir Roland, introducing the drawings in the show (the one aspect of the British retrospective which offers material not seen in Paris or New York), places an emphasis on Picasso's most instructive in this medium of the subject of the crucifixion; the recurrence of the theme should cast

intrigued by it if they were not already compelled by the man. Iconography permits the visual arts to come close to making assertions, and Picasso in his graphic work, like at times been an iconographic as any artist of the century. At all periods, and in all mediums, his art has also been icon: taking a strong interest in single or paired figures, static, frontally presented, and sometimes quite straightforwardly re-creating the subject of the crucifixion, the recurrence of the theme should cast

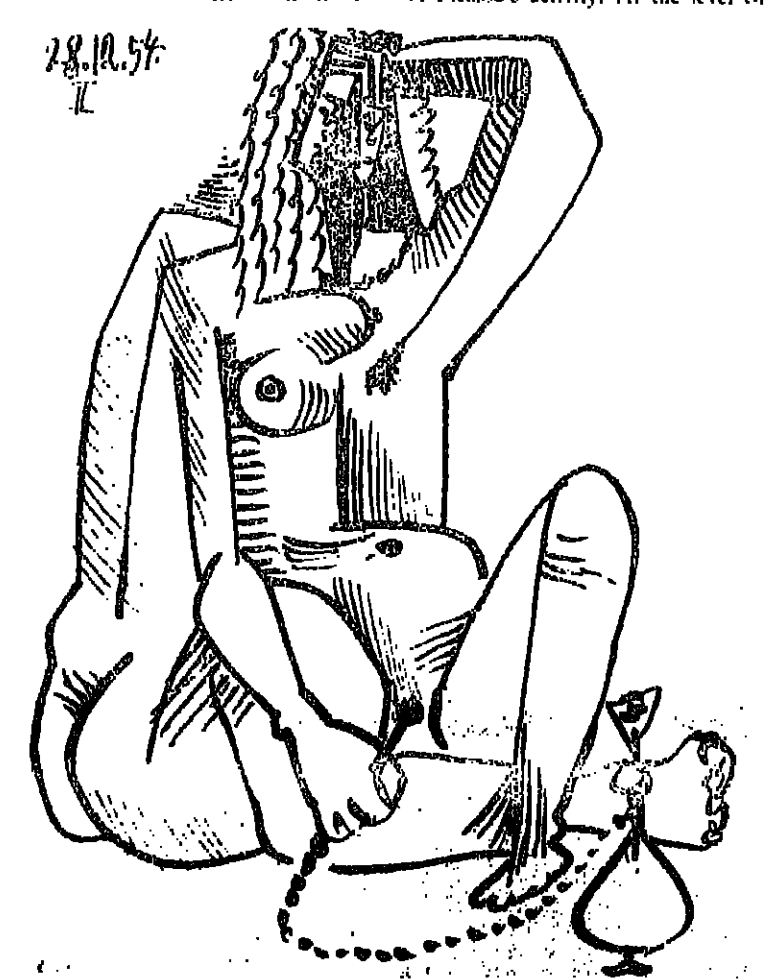
suggested, his great gift, though not his whole inclination, was as a graphic artist, and from 1925 onward, line more or less takes over.

It is, indeed, extraordinary that "The Embrace", and countless other pictures, can be so filled up by a kind of doodling, and not lose intensity. Those stark black marks on Picasso's canvases - whether flowing round a whole form, or occupying a space - become the great channel of his assertiveness, the chief means by which he grips and arouses the spectator. Graphic marks are potentially the most assertive marks an artist can make on his surface. They bespeak the action of the hand, and thus the agent of the picture (especially when they are applied as "The Embrace"). They can become highly personal. There are Picasso methods of executing certain shapes - a method of inscribing a particular knob-cum-lack-like form, for example - which are as unmistakable as a man's handwriting.

Picasso's way of reaching through his work and pressing upon his spectators, even upon those who have scarcely seen it, produces the feeling of a domineering, power-minded personality; hence, also, of a personality that is male-minded (and there has always been an unusually strong whiff of sexuality attending this artist). There may even be felt, in addition, a sense of a frivolous or exploitative relationship between the artist and his art. All this is perhaps an epiphenomenon, a psychological mirage created by Picasso's technical mastery. Certainly he has had his episodes of self-effacement; the period in which he invented collage, for example, and thus often allowed alien inscriptions a place in his work. And there is always a danger, as there is with any individual who is celebrated in a particular walk of life and perpetually offers himself to our attention in this capacity, of taking for granted the gifts and commitment which lie behind the celebrity, and hence of not including them in the whole picture. Picasso's determined and energetic practice of his art is the first fact about his life, and his talent was no less contingent - no less a matter of might-not-have-been - than any other trait of his nature.

But the phrase written at an early date by Picasso on his work, and which is stressed by Tim Hilton, sticks in the mind: *Yo el Rey*, "I am the King". Picasso's treatment of sex in his pictures may be various, but it is never unimportant. The framework of utterly heterosexual, and the continuously struck note is that of a dominant and plundering masculinity. There was something cavalier and cheapening in his relationship to his own medium, and this was enhanced as the paintings became more graphic. Picasso's case is like that of Dickens in nineteenth-century literature. His gifts, and their thrilling, incontinent application, make it absurd to deny him a kind of pre-eminence in the art of the twentieth century. In the other respects his achievement remains controversial, even suspect, and among fellow-artists his authority has not been as great as his fame might suggest. He is the King but (at least since about 1920) of the constitutional type - one who receives fabulous wedding presents, but has no powers.

Current and forthcoming exhibitions include *Patrick Caulfield, Paintings 1963-1981*, at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; *Patrick Heron* at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, and *Martha McGinn, Paintings and Works on Paper*, at the Curwen Gallery, 1 Colville Place, Whitfield Street, W1, both from September 10; and *Gertrude Hermes, R. A.* - an exhibition of work including portrait busts, but particularly the illustrations (including those for *The Compleat Angler*) for which she is probably best known - at the Royal Academy from September 12.



Picasso's "Drawing after Delacroix's 'Femmes d'Alger' (1954), from the exhibition reviewed here.

doubt on "the accepted belief that Picasso was a revolutionary and an atheist". Tim Hilton, in a quite remarkable essay on the show, and with a characteristically memorable turn of phrase, simply says: "What Picasso really thought about human life can scarcely bear contemplation."

There are some interesting suggestions packed into this way of stating the black version of Picasso. How does our inner "contemplation" of Picasso's beliefs relate to the outer, visual contemplation, by the artist, of his subject and, by the spectator, of the works? Were, and are, these contemplations scarcely bearable also? Hilton's phrase is a riddling one, but not idly so. It is one way of leading us to a central peculiarity of Picasso's art, indeed of his whole public being. You cannot escape the sense of the agent - of a man with certain feelings and experiences who has made these marks or forms - in looking at Picasso, any more than the great numbers of the British public who do not care for the art can escape a familiarity with his name. That is why the issue of Picasso's beliefs keeps raising itself. But the identification of these beliefs is problematic, as we have seen, and bound to be so. Another verbal ambiguity is of use here: that of the word "assertion". Picasso's is partly an act of assertion in the sense that it seems to express certain beliefs (his impression is due, on the whole, to an enforcing a sense of force: forever being and activity. His expressive imagery is one aspect of a general habit of assertiveness. A less self-assertive artist would not have employed it as freely, and the critics would be less

New Oxford Books:

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The author traces humanism to its origins and shows how it has permeated every aspect of our daily lives, challenging the idea that, given the time and the resources, man can solve any problem and overcome any obstacle. "An overwhelmingly successful assault in those who claim to predict man's future in the interests of controlling his present." *Sunday Times*. Paper covers £3.95. Galaxy Books 3 September

Hume and the Problems of Causation

Tom L. Beauchamp
and D.C. Rosenberg

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Aziz Ahmed

This selection of verses from Pickthall's translation, *The Glorious Quran*, seeks to provide the essence of the Quranic message and to dispel many of the current misconceptions about Islam. Arranged thematically, it highlights the Quran's pronouncements on man's role in the world, what is required of the true believers in daily conduct and prayer, stressing the qualities of truth, justice, humility, kindness, and tolerance. Paper covers £3.50

Oxford University Press

commentary

Survivors of the Reich

By Timothy McFarland

At the Fountainhead
ICA Cinema

We are now so often confronted with the blurring of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, between documentary and imaginative re-creation, that we may feel slightly irritated when, as in *At the Fountainhead*, we are forced with such explicit insistence to reflect upon their convergence. The central figure of the film is Johannes Schmidt, a German Jewish musician who has been living in London since the 1930s. This not very fictional person is played by three people - by two actors for the pre-war and post-war phases, and also by Val Kennedy, on whose experiences the figure is based, and who is the father of Anthea Kennedy who together with Nicholas Burton wrote and directed the film. Kennedy is seen in his own professional world, playing music and addressing the camera directly, TV-documentary style, and his responses to present and past. Most of the other persons, whether played by actors or not, also speak to us slowly and deliberately with German accents, either directly or as voices-over.

Schmidt is visited in London by

two school-friends, the brothers Gerhard (from East Berlin) and Kurt (from West Berlin), and their sister Sophie. Kurt and Sophie have published in Germany an English book about prominent Nazi criminals still active and flourishing in the Federal Republic; they are facing a libel action and possibly even prosecution under the anti-left-wing legislation of the mid-1970s. Their book sounds uncommonly like Tom Bowler's recent *Blind Eye to Murder*, except that it has evidently been presented as a work of fiction, so the discussion of the non-fiction / fiction distinction shades over into reminiscences of Germany personally experienced in Germany in the Third Reich and after the war, and into talk of the unreformed authoritarianism of West Germany as perceived in the light of these memories.

Burton and Kennedy have been careful not to give their film the structure of a fictional narrative. Nevertheless some of the best moments occur when the techniques usually used in their most fictional and cinematic, as in the episodes set in the rubble-mountains of Berlin in 1945: a black GI in a jeep, contemptuously tossing out a few bits of food and seizing a camera, or the scene in which a woman is observed carefully unswitching the black-and-white swastika disc from the Nazi flag so that she can greet the Russians with a plain banner, only to be given away

by the unfaded dark circle in the centre. Alongside this, much of the documentary material from the archives - Monty inspecting the destitute German population, or crowds of refugees on Breslau railway station - makes only a very general point and lacks any clear connection with the figures out of whose experience it must seem to arise. The same goes for the filmed extracts from Wolfgang Leonhard's memoirs about the crushing of an independent German Communism in East Berlin after the war.

Altogether, the implied view of German history is too impressionistic and oddly concocted to be satisfactory - as is the title of the film, which alludes rather pointlessly to an extreme right-wing group of cranks run by Ludendorff's widow. Much better than this is the projection of the Johannes Schmidt / Val Kennedy figure, which achieves a fine melancholy inwardness. He had left Berlin after the Reichstag fire and the subsequent arrest of the Bulgarian Communist Dimitrov, who had lodged with his parents. Vain attempts to settle in France, Holland and Soviet Union are shown selectively, with a dry, fastidious spoken commentary that captures the shaping action of memory admirably. Developed further, and free of much of the other material, it would make marvellous television.

What, if anything, survives of his polemics? Are they hopelessly dated? Or are they still alive, but unacceptable? Was he a racist? Can his *Germania* be seen as a forerunner of Nazism? Or should his thought not be judged in twentieth-century terms at all? If so, where is his place in the nineteenth-century spectrum? Was he a young radical who became an old reactionary? Did he say anything positive - or was he nothing but "Mr. Pessimist Antic"? Was he essentially a Scottish writer? Or was he the "Germanized Englishman", as many Germans saw him, who tried to neutralize in English the strain of Jean Paul Richter? Was he a fraud? Did he exploit the ambiguities of religious language while remaining an unbeliever? Was he a case of psychological diagnosis or a dear old boy whose bark was worse than his bite?

These and many other questions recurred constantly in the discussions of scholars and students drawn from various universities in Great Britain, Germany, the United States, Canada, and Sweden, who assembled recently (from August 11 to 15) at the pleasant little town of Garmersheim, in the Palatinate, for an "International Thomas Carlyle Symposium". The moving spirit of the conference, Professor Horst Drescher of Mainz, has recently established a "Scottish Studies Centre" there, and this conference was held under its auspices, with the aid of a grant from the Volkswagen Foundation. The conference was intensive, quick-moving and lively, and it was widely agreed that it brought out the colourfulness and variety of Carlyle studies today.

Kenneth Fielding, one of the editors of the Letters, set the tone by an opening address which stressed the intensely personal quality of all that Carlyle wrote. On the whole it was the younger Carlyle who was most to the fore in the papers that followed - the Carlyle of *Sancti Heroes* and *Hero-Worship*, the *French Revolution*, *Past and Present*, rather than *Cromwell* or *Frederick*. As for the "unacceptable" Carlyle of *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, *The Nigger Question*, and *Shooting Niagara*, there were certainly a few swishes of the whitewash-brush at times. But on the whole the conference did not shrink from admitting, and facing, the challenges of the "unacceptable" rounded Carlyle. The German scho-

lars present, for example, were notably candid about his recruitment in the Nazi period, and the consequent slump of his reputation in present-day Germany. In the end we were left with the impression of a Carlyle still problematic, but more ambiguous, protean, and contradictory than the textbooks show us; less the "sage" or even the "prophet", than the satirist, the ironist, the man of many masks.

A symposium on George Gissing is being held at Bretton Hall, Wakefield from September 4 to 6. Papers will be read by Peter Keating, Gillian Tindall ("Gissing and France"), Jacob Korg ("Gissing and America") and John Halperin ("How Gissing read Dickens") among others. The fee including accommodation is £35. For further details contact Ros Straton, 368 Springvale Road, Sheffield S10 1LN. Tel. (0742) 663976.

Bit parts

By Richard Combs

Muriel
Camden Plaza

Towards the end of *Muriel*, a film made by Alain Resnais in 1963 but long unavailable in this country, a man puzzling over a piece of paper at a busy intersection asks for directions to the centre of the city. You're standing in it, he is told. In his brevity, its casualness, and its lack of connection with what comes before or after, the scene is consistent with what must be one of the cinema's most thoroughgoing mosaics. *Muriel* is made up of a thousand such fragments, as bright and realistic as snapshots, except that all the realistic links of plot and character are missing. They are lost somewhere in those familiar Resnais sundries of time, memory and the imperfect past in which characters seem to be stuck. It is obviously dangerous in these circumstances to look for a single key, but that particular fragment comes close to supplying it.

To begin with, the city in question is Boulogne, which seems to have attracted the film-makers for its ambivalent status, part pre-war survivor, part reconstruction. And if the city hasn't yet come to terms with itself, then how can the inhabitants? Bernard, step-son of Hélène (Depierre Seyrig), has recently returned from military service in Algeria. War, and the awful ease of his complicity in a murder (the victim being the unseen "Muriel"), has permanently shattered Bernard's composure. He hops, scurries, cycles and rides (on a white horse - never was there a more ambivalent knight) through the film, and finally tries to resolve matters in another act of murder.

This, conventionally enough, is landscape reflected through character. But in a Resnais mosaic, bits of both can become interchangeable, as in the strange scene where Hélène, at her wit's end, runs to some old friends and they take her in, talking of some past quarrel which they hope can be patched up, as if she and they represented the new and old parts of the city and were attempting a reconciliation.

It is also typical of a film in which the centre is everywhere and nowhere that those friends should turn up only near the end and then only for one scene. Important characters, in other words, can look like walk-ons, and vice versa. Bernard has a girlfriend, Marie-Do, who pops up

quite frequently but has no real presence in the film. This is a symptom both of Resnais's elaborate stylization - its piecemeal, allusive jumpiness - and the extreme realism of his theme. The bits of the main characters' lives that we see are implicitly no different from the lives of the bit characters whom we hardly see at all. When Hélène invites an old lover, Alphonse, to town, and he begins reminiscing about the affair he had after losing touch with her (during the war, of course), she interrupts with the anguished cry that it sounds just like their own story.

What is obviously more important here than the story (for all that) is the obsessive reminiscing, it is hard to piece together what did happen to Alphonse and Hélène in the pattern of these lives. And that continues to be dispersed, incomplete, a trail of loose ends which can be followed as far as one likes. The man who can't find the centre of town is in a fix much like Hélène, who can't quite pull her life together, whose house is furnished with the antiques she is in the business of selling, and who warns dinner guests to be careful with the plates because they've already been sold. Alphonse wanders round Boulogne, ostensibly in pursuit of business contacts, but talking to everyone to avoid making the real contacts and decisions. The most important incidental character turns up in the film's last shot, Alphonse's wife Simone, who has come in search of her errant husband and wanders round the empty apartment from which everyone has fled, like so many scattering atoms.

If the disruption and randomness of what it shows make *Muriel* a pre-eminent modernist film, it has also acquired a certain period charm in the nearly two decades since it was made. There is even a (perhaps deliberate) romanticism about it. Hélène, dashing about on restless errands in a crushed hat and voluminous fur, could easily be playing Ingrid Bergman to Alphonse's Bogart in some middle-aged version of *Casablanca*. But what brings it right up to date is the fact that, made as it was immediately after *Last Year at Marienbad*, it marks a clear break for Resnais from the particular kind of avant-garde abstraction. In method it leads towards *My American Uncle*: it is an intricately detailed fiction through which we must pick our way like cautious researchers. The more evidence that turns up, in each crystalline fragment, the more we're obviously missing.

Among this week's contributors

DEREK BEALES is Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge.

HAROLD BEAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

ALAN BELL has been appointed Librarian of Rhodes House Library, Oxford. His biography of Sydney Smith was published last year.

PETER BLAND's latest collection of poems, *Stone Tents*, was published earlier this year.

ALAN BORG is Keeper at the Salisbury Centre for the Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia.

ANTHONY BURGESS's novel, *Earthly Powers*, was published last year. His opera, *The Blood of Dublin*, will be broadcast in 1982.

J. M. COCKING is Emeritus Professor of French at King's College, London. His *Marcel Proust* was published in 1975.

RICHARD COMBS is editor of the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

ANTOINETTE COMPAGNON's most recent book is *Nous Michel de Montaigne*. Denis Donoghue is Henry James Professor of Letters at New York University.

L. P. ELWELL-SUTTON is Professor of Persian in the University of Edinburgh.

GAVIN EWART's *The Collected Ewart* 1933-1980 was published last year.

PHYLIS GROSSKURTH is the author of *Havelock Ellis*. 1980.

TOMY HARRISON's new collection of poems, *Continuous*, will be published this autumn.

THOMAS HINDE's novel, *Daymare*, and his memoirs, *Sir Henry and Sons*, were published last year.

PETER KEMP is the author of *Muriel Spark*. 1974. His critical study *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Age* is due to appear later this year.

EDWARD LARRISSY is a lecturer in English at the University of Warwick.

VIRGINIA LLEWELLYN SMITH is the author of *Anton Chekhov and the Lady with the Dog*. 1973.

MICHAEL MASON is a lecturer in English at University College London. TIMOTHY MCFARLAND is a lecturer in German at University College London. EDWARD NORMAN's books include *A History of Modern Ireland*, 1971, and *Church and Society in England 1770-1970*, 1976.

NICHOLAS PHILLIPSON is co-editor, with Rosalind Mitchison, of *Spenser in the Age of Improvement*, 1970.

W. W. ROBSON is Masson Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

HELEN ROSENAU is the author of *Vision of the Temple: The Image of the Temple of Jerusalem in Judaism and Christianity*, 1979.

CAROL RUMENS's most recent collection of poems is *Unplanned Music*, 1981.

WILLIAM SCAMMELL is Staff Tutor in Literature for Cumbria at the University of Newcastle. His latest collection of poems is *Yes & No*, 1979.

R. T. SHANNON's books include *Crisis of Imperialism 1865-1915*, 1974, and *Chadstone and the Bulgarians*, 1975.

T. A. SHIPPEY's most recent book is a study of *Beowulf*, 1979. He is Professor of English Language at Leeds University.

JOHN STURROCK is the editor of *Strand Magazine* and *Since*, 1980.

JONATHAN SUMPTION's books include *The Pilgrimage*, 1975, and *The Abolitionist's Crusade*, 1978. ALAN YOUNG's new book, *Dogs and After*, is due to appear in September.

Akhmatova and Chukovskaya

Sir - I should like firstly to correct an error in Henry Gifford's review of Lydia Chukovskaya's *Zapiski ob Anne Akhmatovoy*, Vol. 3, 1952-1962 (August 7). Mr Gifford writes: "They went into the Patriarchal church . . ." and follows this with a quotation from Chukovskaya's text beginning: "The singing was humorous . . ." etc. In point of fact, both Akhmatova and Chukovskaya had already left the Patriarchal church when they heard the "harmonious" singing, and had entered another church, "a smaller one" nearby.

Chukovskaya notes that the singing in this church is quite different from the singing in the Patriarchal church, which she describes as "angelic". In the smaller church the visitors join in with the singing of the choir, and it is this event which prompts Chukovskaya's comment about the singing being "harmonious". Akhmatova's "gracious mood" on this occasion is, I suspect, not due to the atmosphere inside the church, which is, if anything, rather hostile towards these "outsiders" - nor to the quality or effect of the singing - but rather to an inner contentment which reveals itself in an open display of faith inside the smaller of the two churches.

Anna Andreevna got down on her knees before the icon of the Holy Virgin, while we went out. Shortly afterwards, she joined us. (p. 17)

The whole point of this description, it seems to me, lies not in a comparison of Akhmatova's poetry with the faces of the people singing in church, as Mr Gifford suggests, but in the contrast between Chukovskaya's own feeling of discomfort and Akhmatova's radiant day.

Second, it seems to me that Mr Gifford has omitted to mention some of the more important contents of this diary. Chukovskaya has meticulously documented the lives of many of Akhmatova's close friends and acquaintances of this period in the copious biographical notes to be found in the appendices. This information is invaluable for scholars, since it records at first hand what became of many minor writers, poets, musicians, artists, etc. It also provides much welcome information about the various people who volunteered their secretarial services to Akhmatova during the later years of her life.

Equally important for scholars of Akhmatova are the textual variants of many of her poems written during the 1920s and 60s which are presented in Chukovskaya's edition. The texts of fourteen poems which do not appear in the two-volume *Collected Works* edited by Struve and Plipov (Munich, 1968) and which have never been published in the Soviet Union.

We read with astonishment Chukovskaya's account in this diary of her relations with Olga Ivinskaya. Ivinskaya's role in Pasternak's life and work has been much romanticized and dramatized since the publication of her memoirs, *A Captive of Time*. Chukovskaya had known Ivinskaya before her arrest when they had both worked for a publishing house. When Ivinskaya was released from a camp in Potma in 1953 she offered to send parcels of food and clothing on Chukovskaya's behalf to a mutual friend, a writer named Nadezhda Adolfovna Nadezhkina who had remained behind in the same camp. When Nadezhkina was eventually released, Chukovskaya learnt that she had not received a single parcel from Ivinskaya during the entire period of time. Evidently Ivinskaya had pocketed money and goods while assuring Chukovskaya that Nadezhkina was receiving the parcels! On hearing the whole story from Chukovskaya, Akhmatova displayed a fury rarely witnessed.

To rob a friend, a prisoner who is dying of hunger . . . I never heard of such a thing in my entire life. (. . .) I hope you have already told Boris Leonidovich whom he is eulogizing . . . (p. 154)

Typically, Chukovskaya said nothing to Pasternak. She blamed herself in part for having placed her faith in Ivinskaya ("careless, a pathological liar").

Mr Gifford is undoubtedly correct in his judgment of Chukovskaya's faith in Akhmatova's poetry, but he misses the real reason she continued to keep her diary with such care, and why she accorded so much awe to her meetings with Akhmatova:

I maintain that any religion is born from the belief that the dead have not departed from us. Is this a belief in God? No, very likely it is (a belief) in the marvel of meetings between human beings, (the marvel) of words, of ties. (p. 448)

It was an enduring belief in the marvel of meetings that sustained Chukovskaya throughout the years of suffering and hardship and led her to "decade" her diaries, of which there remains one more volume. This final volume covers, I suspect, the fate of Akhmatova's archive after her death, and the posthumous publication of much, though by no means all, of her work.

ISIA TLUSTY.

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The Turner Bequest

Sir - Since competing groups of trustees (of the National Gallery, British Museum and Tate Gallery) have not been able to agree upon one place for the exhibition of the Turner Bequest, the time has come (as stated in the letter by Selby Whittingham in your issue of August 7) for the choice of the place and a new body of trustees to be made by the Government through Parliament.

The artist's gift was to the Nation and its People. However, it does not follow that there is an obligation to exhibit the bequest in London, and before any more money is spent on planning a new wing at the Tate Gallery the assumption that the picture should stay in London should be questioned. The greedy metropolis situated at the periphery of the realm, already has too large a share of our national artistic treasures.

Since Turner travelled much in the North of England, I suggest that Her Majesty's Government purchase a country house in that central part of the United Kingdom. A permanent exhibition in a house in Yorkshire would be ideal, because Turner often stayed with his patron and friend Walter Fawkes of Farnley Hall, near Leeds.

GEORGE HUXLEY.

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From the Italian

Sir - Yakov Malkiel, in his review of *The Cambridge Italian Dictionary*, Volume 2 (August 14), is inaccurate in his tribute to Dr Barbara Reynolds's gift for translation from and into verse, and ignores the contribution of Dorothy Sayers to the three volumes of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the Penguin Classics.

Dorothy Sayers was wholly responsible for volumes 1 and 2, which appeared in 1949 and 1955. After her death in 1957, Barbara Reynolds completed the translation of volume 3 and wrote the notes and introduction; this was published in 1962.

Dr Reynolds also translated for the Penguin Classics Dante's *La Vita Nuova* (1969), following the mixed prose and verse of the original, and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in two volumes of verse (1975 and 1977).

BETTY RADICE.

Penguin Books Ltd, 336 King's Road, London SW10 0UH.

The Arts Council Poetry Library has compiled lists of poetry groups and workshops, poetry magazines and bookshops in London and elsewhere. The lists are available free of charge from the Arts Council Poetry Library, 8 Long Acre, London WC2.

'The Blue Carbuncle'

Sir - D. B. Gregor (Letters, August 14) asks about the last paragraph of 'The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle', in which the expression "commuting a felony" is used. This has already been the subject of some debate, for example in the note to *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, edited by W. S. Baring-Gould (Murray, 1968, Volume 1, p. 467), where the three other felonies which Holmes "commutes" and "condones" are mentioned.

From the first publication of the story in the *Strand Magazine* for January 1892, the phrase "commuting a felony" has appeared in every major edition, excepting that published recently by Penguin Books: the first English edition (Newnes, 1892), the first American edition (Harpers, 1892), the new edition by Newnes (1894, transferred to Smith, Elder in 1907, then to John Murray in 1917, and used for the colonial issue), the Newnes sponser edition (1898), the pocket editions of Smith, Elder (1912, transferred to Murray in 1917), and Nelson (1914), the thin paper edition by Murray (1924) and their omnibus volume (1928). It also appears in this form in the Author's Edition (1902-3) published by Appleton (issued in England by Smith, Elder, and later by Murray), in the two-volume Memorial Edition (1930) published by Doubleday and Doran (from which the Penguin omnibus [1981] and the Secker and Warburg *Complete Adventures* [1981] are derived), and in the Crowborough Edition (1930), as well as the separate edition published by the Baker Street Irregulars (1948), and the Continental edition published by Tauchnitz (1893).

Doyle did not shorten his Ts, and, as his handwriting was always very distinct, it seems certain that he did write "commuting a felony". Mr Gregor is probably right to suggest that the phrase is misused, though the sense is clear. Holmes was not *commuting* a felony (in that he did not condone it) nor *committing* one, he was forgiving a felon or commuting the penalty which should legally have followed the felony.

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Proust and Blossom

Sir - It may be more than a simple sense of personal admiration that distresses me when I read reviews of Kilmartin and see references to K. K. Scott Moncrieff as, it would seem, the only translator of Proust's *La recherche du temps perdu*, except for Stephen Hudson's last volume of *Time Regained*. Even another more recent translation, by Andreas Mayor, with a long introductory statement, does not seem to acknowledge *The Past Recaptured* (the American title), which was previously translated by Frederick A. Blossom (A. & C. Boni; later Random House).

Stateside at least, Blossom's has been the standard and most familiar translation, to which most readers have access. Unfortunately they fail to notice the title-page attribution to Dr Blossom and assume that they are reading the Scott Moncrieff edition and the more publicized Hudson version right through the last volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*. Numerous scholars, and even Proustians I know, have never realized this.

Frederick A. Blossom was an outstanding scholar, ardent atheist, a labour leader, social worker, birth-control activist, a Lovestonian (Trottskyite, that is), a food faddist, pacifist, librarian, and all-round liberal, from whom I drew all of my strength and ideas from my twelfth to twenty-third years. Indeed, when I was 13-14, I did all of the proofreading with him, taught by "L.A.M." - on *The Past Recaptured*, which as I recall was commissioned by A. & C. Boni, publishers, for a uniform edition of the

Remembrance series because of some kind of dissatisfaction with the Hudson translation. (Later he edited *Creative Art* magazine for Albert Boni too.) At the time of "our" translation, Dr Blossom was librarian of The Explorers' Club in New York City. He died only a few years ago, in his nineties, active even through his last years in essays for the Appalachian poor. At the time he was the second oldest graduate of Amherst College.

LEE ASH.

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Reading on Horseback

Sir - However many books John Wesley read on horseback (Letters, August 14) his equestrian skills pale beside those of earlier times. Erasmus, perhaps anticipating the competition, seemed to claim in ambiguous Latin that he wrote his *Praise of Folly* on a horse ride from Italy. Modern scholars do their work on bumpy trains and planes, don't they?

JENNY MEZCIEMIS.

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Dostoevsky and the Jews

Sir - John Bayley writes (July 17): "Not firm, surely, but guardian; more specifically one of the guardsmen on ceremonial duty in St Petersburg."

Can he be as sure as all that? There is cogent evidence from an unimpeachable source - Dostoevsky's own wife, Anna Grigorevna - that the "large building . . . with a watch-tower", the setting of the late-life meeting between Svidrigailov and Achilles, was actually the "Petersburg district Police House (Fire Department)" at the corner of "Serezhnevaya Street and Bol'shoi Prospekt". This Dostoevskyan landmark, incidentally, survived in its original state until the year 1931.

I stand by my theory, then - and it is not mine alone - that Achilles was a fireman.

It is worth recalling, too, that in his Coronation Manifesto of August 1856 Alexander II abolished, among other things, the abhorrent institution of forced Jewish juvenile conscription. The action of *Crime and Punishment* (1866) is laid in Petersburg in the post-Emancipation period. But purely for argument's sake, let us concede that Achilles was a Jewish conscript. Even then, it is conceivable that "one of those unfortunate" would have been assigned to a Guards-regiment? Moreover, would an Imperial guardsman have been posted in front of what we know was a fire station?

As to the equations - Svidrigailov = Wandering Jew; Achilles ("In his imperial Russian uniform" [Bayley]; "wrapped in a grey soldier's coat" [Dostoevsky]) = representative of nationalistic orthodoxy - for all their ingenuity, they remain unconvincing. The act of suicide is wholly incompatible with the notion of the Wandering Jew, while the idea of a hapless Jew, who speaks Russian, being the spokesman of Mother Russia just won't wash.

Having said all this, I leave Professor Bayley his humorous interpretation of this scene. For me it is still "arena" and "symbolic", steeped in the eerie fog of Petrovsky Island.

As Dostoevsky himself might have said, had he read Professor Bayley's letter, "Fu, kakoi vzor!" (pooh, bah, fiddlers!).

DAVID I. GOLDSTEIN.

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A *Shorter History of Greek Art* by Martin Robertson (Cambridge University Press) which was illustrated on the cover of the TLS of July 24 is also available in paperback at £9.95.

The United Irishmen

Sir - When Roy Foster in his review of Séan Cronin's *Irish Nationalism* (July 31) writes of "recent research establishing just how unrepresentative the United Irishmen were", he is out of touch with the facts. In my '98 and 'Carlow: A Look at the Historians' (Carlow, 1979) I cite the most recent research on Carlow in 1798 (St. Marya Duggan's unpublished thesis at UCD) showing that of a total population (men, women and children) of circa 44,000 then there were between 11,000 and 14,000 United Irishmen.

PÁDRAIG Ó SNODAIGH.

127 Strand Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4.

Burges and Waugh

Sir - In David Watkin's review of *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (July 17) the story of the Bojeman/Waugh wash-stand is once again retailed. But if one turns from illustration 190 in the book to illustration 201, one discovers a very similar piece of Burges furniture. And this other wash-stand does sport "a prominent, highly ornamental, [presumably] copper tap in the wash-stands, then methinks there's method in it."

Evelyn Waugh suffered all his life from a Holmesian acuity of vision. If it be madness to confuse two Burges wash-stands, then methinks there's method in it.

H. R. CONRAD.

Rehmat, CH-8706 Meilen, Switzerland.



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Return of the author

By John Sturrock

Geoffrey Strickland:
Structuralism or Criticism
Thoughts on how we read
209pp. Cambridge University Press.
£12.50.
0 521 231841

Geoffrey Strickland is a teacher of French literature prepared to resist the invasion of literary studies by French or - to be fair to the variety of what goes on in France itself - by "French" style of criticism. For him there can be no pact with the glamorous, overcharged techniques of Barthes or Derrida and their flocks. The distinction in his book's title is to be taken as damning: Structuralism or Criticism, the choice is ours, but it is a loaded one. Criticism is surely a good, and structuralism therefore a not-good; the critic can never be a structuralist, the structuralist has no business claiming to be a critic.

Strickland's essay, however, is by no means as combative as his title promises it will be. He is of a conciliatory and digressive temper, and his downy structuralism animates without ever governing his book. He forbears, as others earlier have, explaining what structuralism is. He has a short chapter near the start, endorsing, no more, certain valuable qualifications introduced into the Saussurean line of thought by the linguist Emile Benveniste; he has a second short chapter near the end in which he scores some reasonable if also easy points against the late Roland Barthes. But nowhere does he say in so many words what it is in structuralism that he regards as malevolent. His book is anti-structuralist, there is no doubt, but that will only be fully obvious to those of its readers who know already what principles structuralism holds to.

The central, most heartfelt chapter of *Structuralism or Criticism* is called "Thoughts on How we Read," and this occupies ninety of Strickland's 175 pages. His wish here is to reinstate the figure of the Author, as a singular and hospitable presence beyond or behind the text which is attributed to him. Strickland is a forthright "intentionalist" who believes that a work of literature has a "true" meaning which is also its "original" meaning, knowingly invested in it by the person who wrote it. The task of the reader - guided, if need be, by his editors - is to accede to this definitive meaning. He may not share in it wholly, or be sure that he has even found it, but he will be inspired to try to do so by his faith in its existence, together with the knowledge that he is participating in an act of communication between author and reader.

Strickland's adversary in the campaign which he conducts is not so much structuralism, for all its tendency to displace authors in favour of textual "systems," but Jacques Derrida, the predominant "post-structuralist," who has striven so wordily if also subtly these past fifteen years to rid the written word of the very "metaphysics of presence" on which Strickland takes his stand. Strickland is pointedly, and intelligently, reactionary. For him writing and speaking are not to be separated; the text is as warm and immediate as an item of conversation, and the meanings of what is written may be authenticated like those of what is spoken by reference to their unique source: the live author who first put them there. The proper study of literature, therefore, is to journey upstream to the source: "the student of literature is a student of history" is the logical outcome of the course that Strickland has been taking. This, agreed, is a profoundly anti-structuralist: device to point, on one's banner, since structuralism of any kind is bound to be a historical and to leave it as at best an open question which of the meanings discoverable in a text were contemporary with its writing or intended by its author.

Strickland has picked very shrewdly on certain extravaganzas perpetrated in the name of deconstruction, which in the hands of some is mere mania that in particular, he touches on

one aspect of the Derridan philosophy seldom if ever noticed: its solipsism. It is true that if a text is held to be fully autonomous or authorless, a construct of language and "intertextuality" whose centrifugal meanings are no longer to be correlated with a single originating presence, then the deconstructor himself expropriates the glory of creation - the meanings which he has located in all their anarchic diversity, are suddenly his, the property of the gifted reader who has guided us to them. Strickland might have made more than he does of this line of attack since it goes to the heart of the contradiction of Derrida, who has after all made his name as the Great Undoer of other men's Doings. He has said, I know, that he is ready and willing to be deconstructed, as all authors are susceptible of being, but his followers are not as yet rushing to take him up on this sacrificial offer. His own authority survives.

Structuralism or Criticism is not always so successful as this. It fails to engage with the serious structuralist theses in respect of convention in literature, of the extent to which texts contain parody, plagiarism and repetition, of the generative force of language itself, of the fatal gap between what authors believe they have written and what readers understand them to have written. Strickland wants to put the clock back too far, and restore a Romantic concept of authorship whereby the creator of a work is held to be in total and undying command of its every rightful meaning. This will not work. I am sure that we all when reading assume that what we are reading is "intentional" in the weaker sense of being the product of certain intentions in the author's mind. These intentions may not have preceded the act of writing but have been discovered in that act. But there is no reason to press on from this sensible recognition to the extremity of arguing, like Strickland, that we should seek to relive the author's own semantic experience. Strickland's ideal reader is too self-effacing, having lost his entitlement to satisfaction at deriving meanings from what he reads irrespective of the problem of how they got there.

Nor would all of us feel Strickland's urge to establish consensual readings

Artificially artless

By Lachlan Mackinnon

JOHN T. GAGE:
In the Arresting Eye
The Rhetoric of Imagism
188pp. Louisiana State University Press.
£0 8071 0790 5

In this book John Gage not only substantially clarifies the issues raised by Imagist practice, but also offers a sensible discussion of questions implicit in many different kinds of poetry. He does this by approaching problematic lacunae in Imagist theory, which he shows to be frequently self-contradictory where it is not incoherent.

In his first chapter, Gage examines the theoretical premises themselves, paying particular attention to Hulme and Pound. He shows that the theory led them up to a blind alley, because its demands - that their poems be free of all convention - were unrealistic. He says, sensibly, that the distance between the theory and the poetry is to be explained by the failure of the former rather than the latter.

The second chapter shows that Imagism, despite its rejection of rhetoric, did in fact have a rhetoric of its own. A rhetoric, it is pointed out, is only a persuasive technique, and this discussion is resumed in later chapters which examine Imagist methods in detail. The first of these looks at the use of comparison, usually by explicit or implicit simile, on which Imagist poets depend. Using the Gestalt

of literature, in which all readers of good will should concur. There is a hint of bigotry about this, given the absence of any compelling test of verification beyond the appeal to authorial intentions. The meanings which we gather in to ourselves in reading are a mixture of the universal and the eccentric; but once we have experienced them there is no reason why we should surrender them in the interests of a majority reading, after intelligent disagreement with our fellow-readers.

In view of this pressing call for corroboration in the interpretation of literature, it is no surprise that Strickland should finish with a subdued but positive chapter on F.R. Leavis, who taught him and to whose critical practice he remains attached. A contrast is broached between Leavis and Barthes but, like too many other questions in this rather bitty book, it is dropped before it can take hold. This is a great pity because Leavis and Barthes are closer to one another than Strickland allows. He defends Leavis's celebrated and frustrating refusal to declare any kind of allegiance to a critical party or programme. In his clear desire to be heard as nothing other than the voice of his own serious response to what he was reading, Leavis's authority for what he wrote was himself. Barthes, on the face of it, was just the reverse, repeatedly telling us how he abjured all authority, that all interpretations were equal, that as a critic he migrated from text to text and spoke from within them. Yet he had much authority, as he knew, and his denials only drew attention to the unusual degree of it. By constantly shifting his ground and revising his methods, Barthes actually drew more and more authority into himself and made us more attentive to Barthes than to the literature he was writing about. Leavis was the more honest of the two in claiming an impossible independence, but a strong narcissism was common to both men.

Strickland is too set on distinguishing sensible English ways of discussing literature from irresponsibly abstract Parnassian ones, the practical humane from the technico-literary, one might say - that he can see no common ground between Leavis and Barthes. A greater tolerance towards structuralism would have warned him that where difference exists so too does sameness.

terms of figure and ground, the author is able to show how unsettling some Imagist poems are in their reversibility, and, as in Hilda Doolittle's "Oread", an equivocal balance is sometimes achieved. Gage next looks at the means used to organize longer poems, which he shows to have been usually agglomerative rather than organic. The reasons for this are taken to lie in the Imagist insistence on simultaneously, which necessarily involves very sophisticated interrelations between the parts of a poem.

Finally, we revert to the overall problem of Imagism as an epistemology. Gage shows that the Imagists attempted self-effacement, leaving space to speak for themselves, depends upon a belief that the world is univocally significant, and that some kind of natural law will deliver our responses. Pound in particular believed that this applied in ethics as much as in fact, that "is" and "ought" were one when mediated through images of desire.

Gage's consideration of how simile actually works poetically is perhaps the best thing in the book. His readings of particular poems are succinct and lucid, while the general points made have implications, acknowledged but unexplored, for much contemporary poetry. Although the primary intention of the book is to offer a treatment of the assumptions on which Imagism was grounded, and to show why the poems diverge from these assumptions, an intention admirably executed - its secondary effect is to encourage us to think again about the seemingly elementary, but nevertheless intellectually slippery, aspects of poetry as craft which are easily forgotten.

Really imaginary

By Antoine Compagnon

FREDRIC JAMESON:
The Political Unconscious
Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act
305pp. Methuen. £10.95.
0 416 31370 1

Fredric Jameson's book testifies to his irritation with a post-Sartrean criticism which, from Lévi-Strauss to Derrida, by way of Althusser, Foucault, Barthes and Deleuze, has taken Nietzsche as its authority for condemning all attempts at interpreting literature, which it sees as reductive, and for posing the question not of the meaning of a text but of its functioning. Formalism and deconstruction are alike in aiming at an immanent reading of the text instead of a "totalizing" one. They extol the partial and the local, the fragmentary and the disseminated, the haphazard and the schizoid. How, without rejecting textual methods entirely, can unity and meaning be restored to criticism?

This is Professor Jameson's purpose. He will not accept the ideal of textual immanence or the disintegration of the subject. His allegiance is to Marxism and his complaint against such immanent readings concerns their detachment from reality, from history. The text becomes an object adrift, unattached to a referent. But how can criticism be reunited with history, and the text with reality, without relapsing into the historicism against which Structuralism rightly rebelled? Between the referent-less text and the text as mere reflection of reality, a middle way must be sought which will join literature and society dialectically.

In an extremely long first chapter, Jameson distils various French and German authors in search of a new, non-transcendent hermeneutic model, one which can put paid to the textualists without abandoning the text; that is, give the Text back the unity and consistency denied to it in the name of hermeneutics which the Marxist "the political unconscious" is, complex, an explosive mixture of Althusser and Northrop Frye, together with a pinch of (a historicized) Greimas and a soupçon of (a dehumanized) Lukács. From Althusser Jameson takes his critique of mechanistic conceptions of the articulation of culture and society, and his accounts of a structural causality in which the superstructure - including the Text - enjoys a relative autonomy; from Frye, he takes as a unifying catalyst the well-known interpretive code of *The Anatomy of Criticism*, which Frye borrowed from medieval theology - the doctrine of the four meanings of Scripture: the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogic.

Jameson's thesis of the "political unconscious" likens literature to a myth which "must be read as a symbolic mediation on the destiny of community". The Text attempts to resolve, in the domain of the imaginary, the contradictions of social reality, just like the mechanisms of the "pensée sauvage". In Lévi-Strauss, literature is a "historical *pensée sauvage*", and must thus be read - interpreted or rewritten - as being itself a rewriting of history and of reality. Here, then, is the middle way between French textualism and the Marxist "the political unconscious": the text, in the last resort, is a non-transcendent limit of all writing. One might quibble with the expression "political unconscious", which raises the question whether it is to be taken as a collective unconscious. Despite Jameson's allusions to Freud and Lacan, he owes his conception of the "political unconscious", as well as the doubts about the status of archetypes that it entails, to Jung.

In the remainder of the book this thesis is tested out on three authors, Balzac, Gissing and Conrad, in order to show the emergence of the bourgeois subject and then its disintegration, of which textualism is only the symptom, in the hope of a fresh organization of social life to give the individual back his identity. This leads Jameson to a judicious re-examination of the received view of Balzacian realism. There is, he agrees, realism in Balzac, but it comes not, as Lukács would have it, from the novelist's sensitivity to political and social realities. On the contrary the Balzacian novel is in principle utopian rather than realist. But reality resists the novelist's fantasy, which demands systematic satisfaction or conjuration of the obstacles opposed to it by a reality principle which is also history. Hence realism is a construction intended to resolve social contradictions in imagination, at least, and to indulge fantasy. Balzac, in fact, is a realist the better to satisfy his imagination.

With Conrad, Jameson notes the novelist's indeterminate position between high literature and popular culture, between Proust and Stevenson, as represented by the contrast between the two parts of *Lord Jim*: the episode of the Patna and Jim's life in Patusan. Conrad belongs simultaneously to modernism and to popular fiction, to textual writing and the adventure story. The times through which he lived, of capitalist rationalization and the bourgeois cultural revolution, were those which saw the emergence of the *imaginaire* as a utopian compensation for the reification of social relations. The world was de-realized by being rewritten impressionistically. But with Conrad the *imaginaire* is ambiguous, at once archaic, like the stratagem of the story-teller, to which he resorts with Marlow, and modernist or even post-modernist, as with the start of *Lord Jim*, which looks forward to Joyce, Virginia Woolf and the "écriture flottante" of the textualists.

In Gissing, who comes between Balzac and Conrad, a post-Dickensian stage of the capitalist mode of production destroys the model of social totality hitherto represented by the realist city, dictating instead the "experimental novel". Experimental novels, Zola's example, imagine other forms of history, which disturb class boundaries and dissolve bourgeois bad faith - such is the philanthropic model of *The Nether World*, which might apply to have been compared with its Balzacian equivalent, *L'Envers de l'histoire contemporaine*, since this novel lacks the *ressentiment* which Jameson sees as the novelty of Gissing's book, as well as the mainspring of subsequent bourgeois fiction.

The originality of Jameson's readings comes from the fact that he is not content merely to unmask the ideological and reactionary in literature, as Marxist hermeneutics has traditionally sought to do. Every cultural object contains another, progressive dimension, which Jameson, following Ernst Bloch, contrasts with ideology. His own positive hermeneutics is fixed as firmly on the utopian as the ideological. Balzac, Conrad and Gissing can thus be saved for a history of the *imaginaire* which is not just "false consciousness" but also desire. The axiom of *The Political Unconscious* is that any text, however ideological, is also utopian - it contains a promise. Some will not fail to adjudge this a very optimistic axiom, or even an idealist or humanist one, even though Jameson takes every precaution not to confuse it with what Marlow has to say in *Heart of Darkness*: "The mind of man is capable of anything - because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future."

Cambridge University Press have recently reissued *Semiotics*, P.R. Palmer's introduction to the subject for students and the general reader (222pp. £12.50. 0 521 28376 0; paperback, £4.50). This second edition includes chapters on such topics as "Lexical Semantics", "Semantics and Grammar" and "Utterance Meaning", and the author has also taken account of recent major advances in the field, notably in a new chapter on "Semantics and Logic".

An earl and his agitations

By R. T. Shannon

GEOFFREY B. A. M. FINLAYSON:
The Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury
1801-1885
639pp. Eyre Methuen. £19.50.
0 431 28200 7

If you brave the Piccadilly traffic and then brave the huddle of ill-conditioned young people swarming at the base of the "Eros" fountain (or Christian Charity or Divine Love: there has never been an authoritative designation), you can read on a series of small panels set around the skirt of the bronze mantle a tribute to the memory of Anthony Ashley Cooper, seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, Knight of the Garter, born 1801, died 1885, composed by Gladstone.

During a public life of half a century he devoted the influence of his station/ the strong sympathies of his heart/ and the great powers of his mind/ to honouring God/ by serving his fellow men/ an example to his order/ a blessing to his people/ and a name to be by them ever gratefully remembered.

The two allusions to Shaftesbury's aristocratic status are characteristic of Gladstone; and they reflect accurately Shaftesbury's own highly patently aristocratic disposition. They pose as well a problem at the centre of Geoffrey Finlayson's scholarly enterprise of providing an ample and comprehensive reconsideration of Shaftesbury nearly a century after Hodder's three celebratory volumes of 1887.

What Finlayson reveals most vividly and rewardingly in his portrait is that, though an aristocrat, Shaftesbury was always an outsider, both socially and politically. He was never at ease with his order, rarely on speaking terms with his father, awkward in his Whig upbringing, usually at odds with the Tories, invariably embarrassed financially, finding eventually a measure of stability only in a happy marriage and as the retainers of his stepfather-in-law and father-figure substitute, Palmerston. A misfit in his time very often comes into his own with later generations. Shaftesbury, a misfit on a grand scale, gets the worst of both worlds. He "fits" even worse with us now than he did then. The late Lord Hammonds offered him in the 1920s as a feature in their polemic against the Industrial Revolution: an unconvincing role, increasingly ungrateful since Geoffrey Best's brilliant short survey (1964) corrected the Hammonds but eschewed biographical ambitions. Georgina Battiscombe's short biography (1974) was the first to offer deeper insights into the psychological aspect. But the great Victorian reputation celebrated by Hodder still lay in ruins. Shaftesbury's ultimate failure, perhaps, was to fail Lytton Strachey's test as a target for his *English Victorian* tests. It was reserved for Charles Whibley to arraign for the post-Victorian generation Shaftesbury's egoism, philistinism, joy-killing moroseness, intolerance, the barrenness of the sense of duty which dictated his social concern, the isolation caused by his refusal to "abate by a jot his stiff-necked, unconquerable pride".

Though never ceasing to strive to save from tragedy those who sought his protection, Shaftesbury, concluded Whibley, "will be remembered as the most darkly tragic figure of his generation".

This rather hyperbolic interpretation is certainly one sustained by Finlayson. His treatment is characterized by a gently disinterested detachment, leaning discreetly in the direction of sympathetic awareness of Shaftesbury's problems and burdens. Indeed, problems and burdens are very much the dominant theme. Shaftesbury indulged a penchant for being one of life's victims; and he had a talent for complaint. He was the leader of the Evangelical interest. He was never happy with it as a regime, like this: "Who is to lead a regime like this? he asked despairingly in 1869 after the failure to stop the 'neologian' Temple from getting the see of Exeter:

"Even Falstaff would not march through Coventry with them."

Many of his problems were self-inflicted, mainly by incompetent bigotry. Long before Shaftesbury died the influence of the "Saints" had degenerated into performing as the Establishment wing of the philistine puritanism which poisoned Victorian culture. The main count against Shaftesbury is that he did so little to alleviate this toxicity. Denis Brogan remarked in 1942 that "the ecclesiastical position of the great Lord Shaftesbury is probably that which appeals least of all to the religious mind of today". Another forty years have done nothing to make the weight of that Victorian hand lighter, or the values it sought to impose more appealing. Nor is there any escape from it. Any presentation of Shaftesbury which deprecates or mitigates the sovereign fact that he abated not a tittle of the narrowest and most fanatical "Protestant" doctrinal severity misses the main point about him. Shaftesbury was fully assured of the direct and constant providential government of the world, the imminence of the Second Coming, the pervasiveness of sin, the hopeless depravity of man, with the human heart invariably "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked". Finlayson cannot be faulted for failing to give full value to this aspect. He is especially good on the "great doctrine of Man's corruption and infirmity" "coupled with the prodigy of the Atonement" which was the core of Shaftesbury's theology, and which he found "far more comfortable than any reliance on Man's perfection" ("By God's grace, I hold such a doctrine in terror and abhorrence").

Shaftesbury's devotion to and "eager acceptance of the great, necessary and most comfortable doctrine of the Atonement" was by no means the channel of a great, necessary and most comfortable application of Christianity to social problems. He distrustfully distrusted Christian Socialism because of its tendencies towards a notion of justification by works. For Shaftesbury, social endeavour, as Finlayson makes clear, "like missionary work, was not a way of forcing God's hand; it was a way of harmonizing with God's will". Gladstone in fact was giving Shaftesbury rather too much of a philanthropic edge by asserting that he served his fellow men as a way of honouring God. Shaftesbury was quite aware that laws should assume their proper function of protecting the helpless; but it was more important to spend money on the building of churches and to send forth ministers of religion. "All hopes are groundless, all legislation weak, all conservatism nonsense, without this alpha and omega of policy".

"A blessing to his people"? There is a view that Peel, denounced by Shaftesbury as a cold materialist, did more good for the people in one budget than Shaftesbury achieved in a lifetime of conspicuous sentimental agitation. In this respect Gladstone provides an instructive contrast, which Finlayson perhaps might have made more of. Gladstone, a "happy child", was painlessly bred an Evangelical. Shaftesbury, the unhappy son of woefully parents, made himself painfully into one (without, it appears, a distinct "conversion" experience). They intersected as pious young men in the House of Commons in the 1830s, to all appearances much of the same type, both with first-class degrees. Finlayson is wise to insist that "in all his comments about his own position, the state of society, and the conduct of politics", Shaftesbury's views have to be "approached with care". There is the dimension of isolation and alienation to be considered; there is also a dimension of a type of manic-depressive psychological pattern, which Shaftesbury himself came very early to diagnose and define: "how curious and uncertain is my character", he noted in 1829; "sometimes I am in the wildest and most jovial of spirits; at others and for a long period I am in a despondent mood". Thirty years later he still observed the same character of himself: "my temperament is painfully

stone retained his Church interests and his special redemptionist philanthropic office, he decided that Peel showed the better way to a larger and more effective notion of redemption. Budgets would indeed be the thing.

Shaftesbury and Gladstone diverged during the 1840s and 1850s, not without bitter sentiments on the part of Shaftesbury, the outsider, as he observed Gladstone's brilliant progress towards the heart of the great world of politics. For the other central point brought out and underlined by Finlayson is a confessed lack of "vision": Shaftesbury, a prone to failure of nerve, a despondent awareness that he lacked that toughness of fibre with which Gladstone was so copiously endowed and without which a great political career was impossible. Thus, a disinterested and detached examination of Shaftesbury concludes not only that churches and ministers took precedence of social endeavour; it concludes also that social endeavour was a grudgingly accepted second best to reluctantly renounced political ambition.

The reflections likely to occur as one stands by Gladstone's tribute on Shaftesbury's monument looking up Shaftesbury Avenue towards Cambridge Circus (the original site of the projected memorial in 1885) are apt to be on the theme of the mocking ways of time and chance. Immediately on its unveiling in 1893 there was hostility to Alfred Gilbert's statue, with its punning references to a shaft being buried in the earth (I calculate that the target spot is just in front of the lamp-post at the top of Lower Regent Street). Was a nude, epinephrine youth really the most appropriate memorial to the man who succeeded Wilberforce as the embodied conscience of Evangelicalism? Ironically, the Dilly-boy soldier who was the highest joy, then in the deepest despair. His personality was profoundly unstable. Henry Fox noted in him in 1821 a "dash of madness". Florence Nightingale remarked that had Shaftesbury not devoted himself to reforming lunatic asylums (as it happened, literally the alpha and omega of his public work) he would have been in one himself. Finlayson speculates on the possibility of hereditary cyclothymia, with reference to a comparable case-study by Oliver Ransford of David Livingstone. A paranoid strain is certainly evident.

His vulnerability to criticism and to political wounds and bruises is a chapter in the psychopathology of Victorian life. As for labours, difficulties, sorrows and vexations, there is no end. It was a very rare gleam of light indeed when, in 1845, Lord Ashley congratulated himself on "such a thing almost before unpublic, but God and His Truth, should have overcome Mammon and Moloch, and have carried, in one session, three such measures as the Private-works Regulations and the two Bills for the erection and government of Lunatic Asylums. Non Nobis, Domine... Much more indicative of his fortunes was the Lord of abuse he caused to fall on his head when in 1847 he presumed to accept the government's compromise proposals on the factory question. Shaftesbury was prone to make injured announcements that he had been "deposed from the leadership of the Protestant Party". "Even on my own dunghill", he sulked in 1871 over the Ragged School Union, "I am no longer the true Chancellor".

As for friendships severed: Shaftesbury was a difficult man to please; and his paranoid strain rather eagerly detected plots and conspiracies. Gladstone was shocked to discover Shaftesbury's real opinion of him when Hodder's copiously indiscreet volumes came out in 1887. A particular category of those who suffered a withdrawal of Shaftesbury's countenance were "Saints" who tended to go soft. There were Bickersteth and Venn of the younger generation in "the full bloom of arrogant unbelief"; and many more were similarly "deep-dyed in this foul insult to our Lord" of wanting to make some accommodations to

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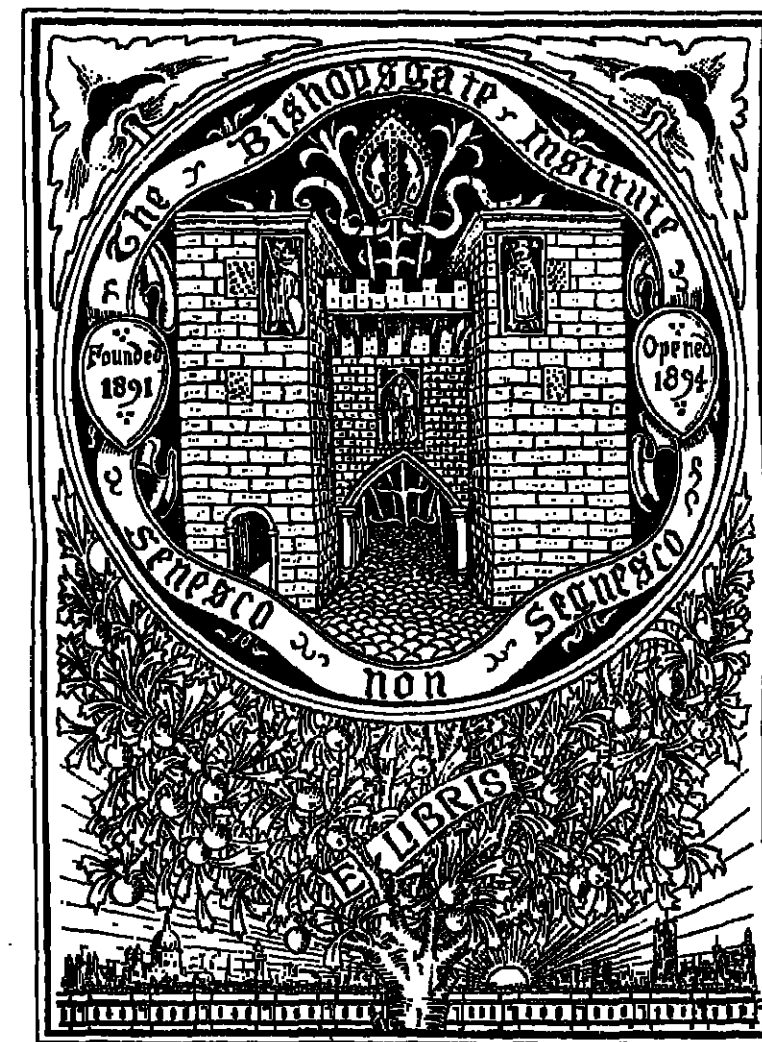
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science, scholarship and conscience. Was it Jowett, the infidel Master of Balliol, the son of one of Shaftesbury's old collaborators? And was not *Eccle Homo*, that "most pestilential book ever vomited from the jaws of Hell", written by one who came from "right good Evangelical stock"? His puritanism made it quite clear to him that the demonstrations against his sabbatarian efforts to prohibit Sunday trading ("sedition and infidelity") were inspired by Russian agents. And it was equally plain to his mind that Renan had written the *Vie de Jésus* for "the most iniquitous purposes".

And as for the political temptations that Shaftesbury resisted, it must be allowed that his record is impressive. His place on the India Board in Wellington's administration proved such a painful experience that he never thereafter regained confidence in his executive capacities. A sense of "predestined failure" made him decline an offer by Palmerston in 1830; he served Peel briefly as a Lord of the Admiralty in 1834; but that was his last political office. His confession of failure was to take a place in the Royal Household; but his dislike of Queen Victoria (reciprocal) made that a course uncomfortable (he denounced her "total ignorance of the country and the constitution, her natural violence and false courage, her extreme and ungovernable willfulness"). His happiest appointment was as an Ecclesiastical Commissioner, from 1841. Still, it was something that Peel could think of him for the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; and something even more that he should have declined Palmerston's offer of the Duchy of Lancaster as he sat in the cabinet in 1855, and Derby's offer of the Home Office or the Presidency of the Council in 1866. These renunciations stemmed from his early sense of inadequacy and a conscious decision to make an alternative "independent" career of public charity and philanthropy. "This clearly is my province. I am called to this and not to any political or social honours".

The pious fiction that Shaftesbury was called to his work when as a Harrow schoolboy he witnessed a pauper's funeral does not survive the distinctly rankling note in his statement of 1841: "I have taken that course which will exclude me, perhaps for ever, from a share in the official government of this kingdom". This was after the impact of



This bookplate (1903) for the Bishopsgate Institute is taken from the Winter 1980 issue of *The Private Library*, Pinner, Middlesex: the Quarterly Journal of the Private Libraries Association (subscription £10). It combines a circular design by Walter Crane of an imaginary medieval view of Bishop's Gate and a decorative base with a tree and London skyline by G. M. McColl.

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1840 of the Report of the Commission inquiring into Child Employment, the "most famous Blue Book of the century". Not for Shaftesbury the "path of profit and honour", but rather the "path of 'no gain' and humility".

It taxed all Shaftesbury's resources of humility to watch not only Gladstone's progress up the path of profit and honour ("mystified, slippery, uncertain, politico-Churchman, a non-Romanist Jesuit", "impetuous and revolutionary", "utterly untrustworthy") but also that of the "Hebrew" Disraeli. That Disraeli was a Jew and "sprung from an inferior station" was in itself a "good thing", as it demonstrated the liberality of our institutions, but Disraeli's behaviour in 1867 over Reform revealed him as having accepted the "Condition of Satan", a "leper", "without principle, without truth, without feeling, without regard for anything human or divine, beyond his own personal ambition". Shaftesbury, it should be emphasized, was not in the least anti-Semitic; he had a great reverence for the Jews as bearers of a divine legacy; and spent a good part of his life in plans for their conversion, and their repatriation to the Holy Land as a necessary precondition of the imminent apocalypse. He had much ado in this connection with the project of a bishopric of Jerusalem (the first bishop declined to suit thither on H.M.S. Infernal, but was quite content with H.M.S. Devastation); Shaftesbury made a point of bowing to Jews in the streets of German watering places; no doubt to their puzzlement.

The private dimension of Shaftesbury's difficulties and sorrows and vexations gets from Finlayson its fullest exposure. Mrs Battiscombe had asked the question about the extent to which Shaftesbury's public disabilities derived from an emotionally crippled childhood. He himself identified as the salient feature in his life the fact that his parents disliked him. Finlayson cautiously points out that Shaftesbury's allegations in this matter need to be treated as circumspectly as in others. The sixth earl of Shaftesbury, the Duke of Marlborough, seems to have been conventionally careless parents but not brutish. They may indeed have provoked Shaftesbury into his religious zealotry, which in turn would have not endeared him to them. And Shaftesbury's relationship with his own eldest son and his daughter-in-law (that daughter of Heth) was difficult, to say the least. Moreover, the alternative domestic scene into which Shaftesbury retreated was odd enough for a man of strict religious principles. He married Minny Cowper, Melbourne's niece and (probably) Palmerston's daughter; Shaftesbury was highly embarrassed that Palmerston took so long to marry his mistress after Lord Cowper's death in 1837. Nor was he ever quite at ease in the Palmerston ménage at Broadlands. The habit of pleasurable activities on the sabbath especially "grieved his soul". "What a predominance of worldly spirit!" "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in the tents of Kedar".

The tents of Kedar at least gave Shaftesbury the satisfaction of being "near the fountain head" when Palmerston was in office, and especially when he was prime minister for almost the whole of the decade 1855-65. He was in a position to influence Palmerston's ecclesiastical appointments, since the prime minister "did not know Moses from Sydney Smith", and treated God as a being, but remote foreign Great Power. Shaftesbury did not always get his own way, and Palmerston would occasionally prefer an "adherent of Balaam" (if only because Palmerston, a son of St John the Evangelist, insisted on keeping the bench of bishops decently stocked with Cambridge men), Shaftesbury's weakness as an ecclesiastical adviser was that he was hostile to learned divines, confining them to deaneries, and insisted on active parochial bishops whose intellectual shortcomings scandalized Gladstone. At least Shaftesbury had the consolation of praying over the dying Palmerston in 1865 and convinced himself that the old man had "joined in the confession of sins and trusted in the merits of the All-powerful Redeemer". (How different from the ghostly death-bed

of Minny's uncle Melbourne! A scene not even that of a heathen, for then there would have been the "image of a ritual"; "it was the death of an animal"; no prayer, not a syllable about repentance, mercy, or judgment.)

Shaftesbury's dependence on Palmerston is measured by the extent of his panic as Palmerston declined and by his sense of desolation in an uncongenial era after 1865 as Gladstone and Disraeli entered upon their inheritances. This was not the only thing that made the new era uncongenial. Shaftesbury increasingly found himself out of humour with the new trends in philanthropy. He disliked the fanaticism of the new anti-alcohol movement. He detested every aspect of the Salvation Army. He associated in the early stages with the Charity Organization Society's rationalization and tightening-up of the provision of relief, but he soon complained about a want of the old merciful paternalism. He had nothing whatever to do, it seems, with the most famous campaign of righteousness of the time, Josephine Butler's agitation against the Contagious Diseases Acts by which the state legislated for, and thereby condoned, licensed prostitution. Why? This is a question Finlayson does not ask, but he ought to have. Nor did the new times care that much for Shaftesbury. He was hurt not to be asked to join the revivalists Moody and Sankey on their committee in the 1870s. He relapsed, grumblingly, into a figure-head role, denouncing the "mischief of State Aid" and reflecting that though "hitherto we have done too little" it was now to be feared that "in some respects we may do too much". It is a melancholy system that tends to debase a large mass of people to the condition of the nursery, where children look to the father and mother, and do nothing for themselves.

Certainly, in the end, Dr Finlayson's exercise is not one of "re-bunking". His claims on Shaftesbury's behalf in that area where Shaftesbury's convictions, convincing claims made for him - the large-scale effectiveness of his philanthropic activities - are modest enough. Shaftesbury's greatest achievement was to act as a focus of public attention: Victorian iconography makes it absolutely clear that the more "sentimental" the cause - climbing-boys, chimney-sweeps, ragged schools - the greater was Shaftesbury's interest. Shaftesbury failed diamally in his primary quest to evangelize the Church of England and the British peoples (and, for that matter, the Indians and the Chinese, for whom he had high hopes). He failed even to save the Church from the infidel Neologians or the popish Puseyites. He failed in his secondary quest to alleviate social distress by independent paternalism and being an example to his order. But he did become, like the image on his monument in Piccadilly Circus, a kind of public talisman.

A Good Read

That summer it was Ibsen, Marx and Gide.

I got one of his you-stuck-up-bugger looks:

ah sometimes think you read too many books.

ah never had much time for a good read.

Good read! I bet. Your programme at United.

The habits of your whisky or your beer?

You'd never get unreasonably excited.

poring over Kafka, or King Lear.

The only score you'd bother with 's your darts,

or fucking football.

(All this in my mind.)

I've come round to your position on 'the Arts' but put it down in poems, that's the bind.

These poems about you, dad, should make good reads for the bus you took from Beeston into town for people with no time like you in Leeds -

once I'm writing I can't put you down!

Tony Harrison

Dignitary with décor

By Edward Norman

WILLIAM J. BAKER: Beyond Port and Prejudice. Charles Lloyd of Oxford, 1783-1829. 245pp. University of Maine at Orono Press. \$20.

When Bishop Lloyd of Oxford died in 1829, just after the political excitement over Catholic Emancipation, neither his family nor his colleagues provided a permanent memorial to his labours apart from a plaque in the cathedral. No one was commissioned to write a biography; no collection of his writings was undertaken; no institutions or prizes were founded in his honour. Lloyd expired out of favour with many of those who might have furnished these conventionalities: he had just changed sides on the Catholic question, in sympathy with his great pupil, "turncoat" Peel.

Even had that not been so, however, the case for fixing his greatness was not altogether obvious. He was an uncorrupt if rather worldly man; but he was neither a formidable scholar nor an effective administrator. He wrote almost nothing, and an enormous amount of his time was expended in attempting to manipulate others in the hope of arranging patronage satisfactorily. In the world of the early nineteenth century that was perhaps unavoidable. It was also hardly novel, in the University society of the time, that a Professor of Divinity should attract an obituary notice which observed that he never "in the slightest degree distinguished himself in the world of letters". His lack of importance clearly made his correspondents less than reverential in the treatment of his missives. In consequence, over many of the pressing concerns of the day, his opinions have been lost. After reference, for example, to the Cato Street Conspiracy and to the Queen Caroline affair, William J. Baker, in this study, has to remark that "unfortunately we have no record of Lloyd's reflections on these matters". In the end, one has to be content with the information that Lloyd "was the first person ever to publish *The Book of Common Prayer* with red-lettered rubrics". It was not, even in the circumstances of the day, exactly an astounding achievement.

Although the reader may justifiably query the intellectual value of a life of Lloyd, however, this book does have merits. It is a gentle and informed account of early nineteenth-century Oxford - and especially of Christ Church - written with accuracy and perception, if also with a devotion to

supererogatory detail which cannot fail to weary the sensibilities. Other recent American biographies of British historical figures have become remarkable for this unhappy characteristic. Professor Baker exudes it at every pore. Here the reader will discover such futilities as a ponderous analysis, by profession, of 127 members of the Eton Fifth Form of 1802. ("Of the 14 young men who would become military officers, four would be killed in the Napoleonic War, and another 14 were destined for posts in the colonies or India.") We are told the dates and prices of the volumes in the Bishop's rather unremarkable library. There is even a paragraph describing the weather in the year of Lloyd's death. To do Baker justice, it must be recorded that he shows occasional restraint in this regard. Noticing that Lloyd's assault upon the opponents of Catholic Emancipation in the House of Lords centred upon those who had, as the Bishop put it, "reached that time of life when most men have succeeded from the busy scene of human life", he considers himself as the Andes to a model. Throughout the entire Church of England, Lloyd added, his own appointment would be of a popular one. "When his own career was at stake", Baker innocently remarks, "Lloyd was seldom given to understatement". Of such are the successors of the Apostles.

There can be little doubt that Lloyd's life alone is scarcely sufficient to justify a biography. The silence of a century-and-a-half has testified to that. By even Baker's generous standards, his subject's claim to this late memorial derives from his capabilities as a teacher rather than as a man of original thought or as a successful activist. He was an ambitious man and a fixer. He seems to have lectured competently and conscientiously - at a time when others did not - to the Oxford undergraduates who beheld him discharging the duties of Regius Professor of Divinity, an appointment he occupied concurrently with his bishopric. Since some of these young men later emerged as leaders of Tractarianism, a fragile thread may be discerned connecting Lloyd with the ecclesiastical *Aufklärung* which occurred just after his demise. Baker makes the most of it. The reminiscences of the Oxford divines are exhaustively turned over to discover references to their indebtedness to Lloyd; but when the desiccated fruits of this research are yielded they scarcely make even a mouthful. Newman, Froude, and Pusey all attended his lectures. They found them satisfactory enough, too. Yet Froude's recollection was that they did not "get at anything"; they came "to nothing satisfactory". That is hardly the sort of reflection that should lead to the supposition, entertained by Professor Baker, that Lloyd played "a considerable part" in the foundation of the Oxford Movement, that he "was the instructor of the Tractarians".

There is, similarly, some exaggeration of Lloyd's significance as an educationalist. Baker sees him as exemplifying a "new breed of Oxford dons" concerned, ambitiously, with the one certain thing about poor Lloyd is that he belonged to the old world, with his wig and his card games, his obsessive "concern" not with the enlightenment of the mind, but with place and office. He was clearly also careful in the performance of his obligations. But he was emphatically not the precursor of reform. The best that can be said about Lloyd's intellectual contribution is actually disclosed in Baker's own summary: his "thorough treatment of the Scriptures made a lasting impression on the stolid mind of Pusey". In Newman's account of his early intellectual and spiritual development - the first chapter of the *Apologia* - there is no reference to Lloyd.

Upon Sir Robert Peel, too, Lloyd's influence cannot have been so great or as decisive as represented in these pages. Peel was a pupil when he was at Christ Church, and Baker tries to establish a lasting connection. The two men certainly had a number of mutually convenient exchanges of mostly relating to questions of patronage. As a fairly senior member of the episcopal bench Lloyd was also consulted about Catholic Emancipation. The evidence for anything beyond a surface relationship is lacking, however, and when an attempt is made, as by Baker, to show that the two men cooperated over the Bullion controversy, in 1819, the texture of interpretation becomes very thin indeed. Peel's great Oxford adviser here was Edward Coleston, not Lloyd. Interestingly enough, Lloyd on one occasion compared himself with Coleston: early in 1826, in the course of a letter to Peel soliciting the see of Oxford should it fall vacant. With that degree of modesty so characteristic of the Anglican hierarchy - and which Lloyd disclosed his suitability for office - he considered himself as the Andes to a model. Throughout the entire Church of England, Lloyd added, his own appointment would be of a popular one. "When his own career was at stake", Baker innocently remarks, "Lloyd was seldom given to understatement". Of such are the successors of the Apostles.

Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland and Poland, 1560 - 1600, edited with an introduction, by Jill Raitt and a foreword by Robert M. Kingdon (Yale University Press, 224pp. 0.300 £24.57 £). Includes essays on Chemnitz, Jansenius, Stanislaus, Hosius, and Faustus Socinius; among the contributors are Olivier Fatio, Fred Kramp and Zbigniew Ogbonowski.

Fundamentalism in flood

By L. P. Elwell-Sutton

HOMA KATOUZIAN: The Political Economy of Modern Iran. Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979. 384pp. Macmillan. £20. 0 333 26961 6

BARRY RUBIN: Paved With Good Intentions. The American Experience and Iran. 426pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95. 0 19 502805 8

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the collapse of the Pahlavi regime was greeted by many intellectuals in the West, as well as in Iran, with euphoric anticipations of a new age. Anti-Pahlavi propaganda had made it certain that there would be little sympathy for the fallen monarch anywhere, but it was only the rare few who foresaw from the start the likely consequences of the wholesale destruction of a way of life that had dominated Iran with increasing momentum for more than fifty years. Homa Katouzian's book, though published only this year, was largely completed before the Revolution, and revised thereafter in two stages. So in March 1979 he could still write: "It is to be hoped that far, after centuries, the dialectic of Iranian history will yield a progressive synthesis". Yet already by the following September his growing disillusionment is clear: "It appears that the Iranian people have been condemned to act as the guinea-pigs for zealous social experimentation - one day, by despotic pseudo-modernists, and, another day, by authoritarian traditionalists; and that the hope that a genuine Iranian synthesis of worthy traditional and modern values and techniques might break this truly vicious circle has again been thwarted."

Katouzian's book is well written, packed with little-known facts, replete with illuminating flashes of insight. He has much that is new and interesting to say about the party politics, political manoeuvrings and individual intrigues of the period. For these things alone the book is well worth reading. It is rather his interpretation of the facts that is open to question.

The chief trouble is that, like too many social scientists, he starts off with a preconceived "model". For him (he is over-fond of jargon) the Pahlavi regime was a "petrolic pseudo-modernism". This, in Katouzian's view, was a bad thing; and so it becomes necessary for him to condemn it on all counts. Good cannot come out of evil, we must assume. The desire for sweeping reforms is dismissed as "obsessive and emotional socio-economic cravings". Industrialization, railways and roads, judicial reform and the codification of laws, educational expansion, female emancipation and family legislation - these were only ploys to ensure the supremacy and permanence of the regime.

Katouzian sees the history of the past fifty years as a simple struggle between the forces of democracy, led by such "intelligent, moderate, dedicated, idealistic" figures as Modarres, the liberal religious leader of the 1920s; Mosaddeq, the nationalist prime minister of the early 1950s; Khamenei, the Third Force leader, on the one hand, and the conservative and despotic powers on the other, led by the Shah and his "arrogant, corrupt, infamous, pack of wild dogs, soulless puppets". (Katouzian has a nice line in invective); supported by the foreign powers, among whom he names (of course) Britain, America and Russia as particularly blameworthy (though the "conspiracy" theory beloved of many Iranian commentators). Nationalism, however, he places firmly in the enemy camp, and therefore, contrary to appearances, "Mossadegh was not a nationalist".

Much of his work is vitiated by this "cowboys and Indians" approach. We get no recognition, for instance, that the failure of Mossadegh's government was a failure of Iranian democracy, still less any attempt to explain this failure. For Katouzian a failure of democracy is a contradiction in terms; it can only have been destroyed by despotic forces backed by foreign interests. Katouzian's ideal is the "melli" personality, force, party, both independent from foreign powers and opposed to the historic and functional Iranian despotism. But he does not explain why groups such as the Third Force, which he praises as most typically Iranian, never seem to have attracted much support. It is not enough to suggest that all those who do not support such idealism are at best "acting against their better judgment", and at worst "servants, henchmen, lackeys" of the regime.

However it is what Katouzian leaves out, rather than what he says, that mars his analysis. He dismisses, for instance, the role played by the huge influx of landless peasants into the cities, where their presence formed the backbone of the risings of 1978 and 1979, in a single sentence: "many of these immigrant peasants participated in this revolution" - an understatement if ever there was one! He nowhere mentions the increasing numerical dominance of young people, the result of health measures and a rising birthrate: in 1976 some 53 per cent of the population were under the age of twenty. But most important of all, it is not until his final chapters, with the benefit of hindsight, that he has anything significant to say about the role of Islam in Iran.

Perhaps he cannot be blamed for this. To most observers, even in the late 1970s, the power of the Shi'a hierarchy in Iran seemed to be on the decline. It is still far from clear (and certainly there is no explanation in Katouzian's book) how the religious institution developed so rapidly into a powerful political force. Probably the most serious mistake is to regard the Islamic Revolution in Iran as in any sense a spiritual revival. Formed and supported only by the political wing of the religious hierarchy, it was a simple bid for political power drawing its main support from the urbanized peasants, hitherto unpoliticized, who instinctively turned to the mullahs for leadership. Young, unemployed, deprived, poorly educated, they were easy meat for the demagogic appeals of Khomeini and his supporters. Having nothing to lose, they could easily be moved by calls to self-sacrifice and martyrdom, to say nothing of the fulminations against minorities like the Baha'is or the Jews, the xenophobic rantings against the "satanic" foreigners, the castigations of the "irreligious bourgeoisie". Such exploitation of the prejudices of the illiterate and deprived is reminiscent of the demagoguery of Hitler in the 1930s or of the National Front in Britain today. The adulation of a charismatic leader is not of course confined to Iranians, but it is by no means uncharacteristic of them: For a time the Shah filled this role; and when he failed, the emotions were quickly and easily transferred to the person of Khomeini. Propaganda emanating from Islamic Republican sources bears a marked resemblance to that put out by the Pahlavi political machine. One has only to substitute the name and photograph of the Ayatollah for those of the Light of the Aryans, or Islamic for pre-Islamic imagery, and the transformation is complete.

At this point we encounter a common theme of defenders of "Islamic" revolutions - that, in contrast to the West where politics and religion are kept separate, in Islam there is no such division. In fact neither proposition is true, nor in any case are they relevant. All political institutions owe their development to the ideological and ethical principles woven into the fabric of the society that has given them birth. But this does not mean theocratic government. Islam, like any other faith, incorporates both the spiritual and the political,

the religious and the secular: the clerical leaders have political weapons at their disposal, if they wish to use them. As Katouzian points out, the religious hierarchy is by no means unanimously behind Khomeini, nor supportive of the idea that the mullahs should involve themselves directly in government. Indeed orthodox Shi'a thought has generally been against such involvement, even when it has advocated theological superintendence of secular government. Khomeini himself in his writings has seemed in the past to favour this view, notably in his *Velayat-e Faqih* (Theocratic Guardianship), and it may well be that the practical problems of enforcing such superintendence while remaining aloof have forced him against his will into the direct rule system that seems now to be taking over. No doubt the younger, more politically-minded mullahs welcome this back-door entry into the political arena. The fact that they have neither training nor experience is unlikely to be a deterrent.

The severest indictment of Katouzian's analysis, as indeed of most of his democratically-minded contemporaries, is his failure to see what the ultimate outcome of the Revolution was likely to be. This is scarcely surprising, given his simplistic view of the line-up of forces during the Pahlavi regime. By virtually ignoring the religious hierarchy, whom they saw as little more than incidental allies, the democratic opposition to the Shah, made no provision for the possibility that a section of the clerics would capture the whole movement in order to establish a regime ensuring complete power for themselves.

The Khomeinist regime is now in the process of establishing a form of despotism that has all the evil features of the previous regime, with, so far, none of its good points. All opposition is to be stamped out, democratic institutions are to be dismantled ("the will of the people cannot be set against the Will of God"); intellectuals, minorities, even the individuals, are to be eliminated from Iranian life. The arrest and execution or imprisonment of political opponents, the suppression of the press, the banning of political parties, the closure of the universities, the enforcement of religious practices such

as the wearing of the veil, are all part of the process. Meanwhile the educated technocratic elite driven into exile, the country plunged into a totally unnecessary war with neighbouring Iraq; and Iran's foreign sympathizers and potential supporters have been almost wholly alienated.

The intellectuals cannot be absolved of all blame for what has happened. During the Pahlavi regime their characteristic stance was to remain outside the political game, to regard the regime as corrupt and therefore untouchable while benefiting from its practical achievements, to criticize without constructing. Naïvely they seem to have believed that the overthrow of the Shah, achieved with whatever allies they could muster, would lead directly to a democratic regime run by liberals and moderates of Katouzian's stamp. It is ironic that the liberal commitment to the concept of popular democracy should have enabled the mullahs to gain supremacy by manipulation of the "will of the masses", while in fact proposing to replace the popular mandate by the "Will of God".

Nowadays many intellectuals both inside and outside Iran (for many have left) are beginning to realize what they have done. By helping to destroy the Pahlavi governmental apparatus, they have thrown the way open to Khomeinist reaction. The complaint of some of them, that "we laid the tarmacadam, and the mullahs drove along it", might be more realistically phrased: "We pulled down the dam, and the flood waters of fundamentalism poured through it". Against this, vague notions of a democratic, decentralized system of government as outlined by Katouzian, leaning neither towards the modernism of the Pahlavi regime nor the Islamic traditionalism of the Khomeinists, are almost irrelevant.

More and more people are beginning to see, in the shape that "Islamic government" is taking in Iran, a betrayal of true Islamic principles - the responsibility of the individual before God, the brotherhood of man, humanity and compassion, tolerance and open-mindedness. But more to the point, the motives of the regime's grass-roots support, the urbanized peasants, are as materialistic as those of any other deprived people. They want food, clothing, housing, and when these do not result from their present leaders' policies, they will look to someone else. No one can predict the outcome of the struggle for power that will follow the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. It may well signal the collapse of the Islamic regime. But what will take its place?

Barry Rubin's book covers the same historical ground as Katouzian's, but is hardly comparable with it. For the most part it is a straightforward summary of political developments in Iran from the fall of Mosaddeq in 1953 to the death of the Shah in July 1980 (the first two chapters, starting with the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, are neither accurate nor original). The author's purpose, certainly, is to write an account of American involvement in Iran, and this absolves him from attempting any deeper insights into Iranian society and politics, though it does not stop him from occasionally doing so, generally with rather superficial results - though his characterization of the most recent events is good. The chief value of the book is the use the author has made of American archives, and it is a pity that it was not possible for him to pursue these beyond the Mosaddeq period, for the subsequent chapters, drawing almost entirely on American press and radio reports, tell us little that is new. Nor are these sources balanced by anything from Iranian or even British sources, so that the overall effect, in spite of Rubin's critical attitude towards American policy, begins to sound like an apology for the twists and turns of American diplomatic dealings with the late Shah.

The general impression that emerges is one of American incompetence rather than incompetence, though there is little evidence of any deep understanding by American diplomats and intelligence officers of the forces beneath the surface of Iranian society. And of course it could also be construed as a refutation of charges of American manipulation of Iranian politics. Rubin himself shows some awareness of the political role of Khomeini and his associates, and the book is certainly much easier to read than Katouzian's, even if it is not so profound.

There is a striking contrast between this highly sophisticated poetry and the milieu which it is supposed to have given it birth, and in later times much was forged for religious or political purposes. Thus a controversy arose among European scholars as to its precise nature and status, and some have been led to believe that it is unsafe to make any deductions from material of such dubious authenticity.

This was, in general, the attitude taken by Taha Hussein and was of a piece with his disgust at the Egyptian religious establishment, clearly visible in his autobiography. Pre-Islamic poetry is part of the fabric of Islamic tradition (which does not clearly distinguish religious from secular) and by impugning its authenticity Taha Hussein was attacking the integrity of the earliest (by axiom uncorrupted) Muslims by accusing them of fraud, and also, by implication, casting doubt on the authenticity of the Koran itself, for the exegesis of which the ancient poetry is often invoked. Indeed, he stated explicitly that the Koranic passages mentioning Ishmael and Abraham are myths not to be taken literally. To the orthodox this made Taha Hussein an apostate, and the religious authorities deployed all their disciplinary resources against him. They did not believe in intellectual freedom, whereas Taha Hussein was an ardent advocate of freedom of thought and expression as understood in the West, and as he had learnt it in Paris. He

was duly branded a *kafir*, that is, an infidel. This did not really affect his career: in fact it increased his popularity among the many who shared his views but whom prudence obliged to remain silent. Taha Hussein never retreated, but he did not expose himself again to such violent censure. Though public demand led to the book being re-printed the following year, it was re-issued in a much watered-down version and has never been reprinted in its original form.

Hussein's autobiography, *Al-Ayyam*, ("The Days") was one of the first books in Arabic in the genre and appeared, spaced over many years, in three parts, of which the present volume is the first. This translation was first published in 1932. The second and third parts have also been translated into English; *The Stream of Days* (by Hilary Waymont) and *A Passage to France* (by Kenneth Cragg). It is an attractive book - simple in style but vivid in its portrayal of the author's life in a humble, traditional Egyptian milieu and later as a student in France during the early years of this century. There is an authoritative introduction by Pierre Cachia.

For more information on this and other books, see the book review section on page 987.

By J. F. P. Hopkins

TAHA HUSSEIN: An Egyptian Childhood. The Autobiography of Taha Hussein. Translated by E. H. Paxton. 85pp. Heinemann. £2.25. 0 435 90228 8

Taha Hussein was born in an Egyptian village in 1889. He was blind from early childhood (a fact never explicitly mentioned in his autobiography) but this disability did not prevent him from rising to a commanding position in the Arab literary world. He died in 1972. He wrote widely and influentially in a mellifluous and simple but highly idiosyncratic style on topics in Arabic literature and social affairs, taught in the Egyptian University, and was for a short time (1950-52) Minister of Education. He initiated and vigorously pursued many controversies but will be particularly remembered for the furor provoked by his book *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926). Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry is a remarkable phenomenon of which the Arabs are rightly extremely proud. The traditional belief among them is that this poetry (of which there is a vast quantity) was produced by the Arabs before Islam, preserved by oral transmission, and committed to writing only after the establishment

Acts of apostasy

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Crucial carved capitals

By Alan Borg

M. F. HEARN:
Romanesque Sculpture
The Revival of Monumental Stone
Sculpture in the Eleventh and
Twelfth Centuries
240pp. Oxford: Phaidon. £22.
0 7148 2168 3

The great monuments of Romanesque art have a seductive beauty which is particularly appealing to contemporary taste, and the fact that many of the best of them are situated in what are still comparatively remote and delightful places only adds to their fascination. The motor-car and the camera first opened up this field, and it is one which remains best known to the general public through the medium of picture-books. Surprisingly, there have been relatively few general studies in recent years of the Romanesque style, or, as here, of one of its major manifestations, and the picture-books have been left to speak for themselves. One reason for this undoubtedly is that the mass of specialized research which has been carried out has made it difficult for any one scholar to impose an overall view of the subject. Indeed, one of the lessons of such research is that simplifications and generalizations are nearly always dangerous. This is not to say that general books should not be written; it does mean, however, that the task is a formidable one, and most scholars find it both easier and safer to produce a scholarly piece of detailed research than to write a coherent history of a medieval style. M. F. Hearn, an established medieval scholar, is therefore attempting a hazardous voyage, on which there are endless reefs to be avoided in weather that is continually changing.

Broadly speaking, two types of book can be written about an artistic style. On the one hand there is the general survey, of the sort exemplified by the Pelican History of Art, in which all manifestations of that style are considered more or less briefly. Such volumes form ideal textbooks and normally provide the best sort of introduction to a particular field. Alternatively, there is the type of book which attempts to construct a theory or theories to explain a style, or artistic movement, based upon the more detailed study of a number of key works. Professor Hearn's book is firmly in the second category, standing in a line which may be said to stem from Focillon's classic study, *L'Art des sculpteurs romans* (1931).

Hearn's stated aim is to construct a systematic theory of the development of Romanesque sculpture, based on the integration of several types of data and grounded in a unified method of classification. [It] assumes alternately the characteristics of a handbook and an essay... [it aims] to provide the student or interested reader with a balanced and coherent introduction to Romanesque sculpture.

Not surprisingly, therefore, what we have here is a personal account of the development of Romanesque sculpture, and one which does not, in fact, give us a balanced picture. This is partly attributable to the limits which the author has imposed on himself; thus, the decision to restrict the subject to sculpture in stone results in the exclusion of the whole of Scandinavia, and the consequent neglect of a stylistic tradition which many would see as vital to the Romanesque aesthetic.

Hearn's views are essentially traditional. Romanesque sculpture is seen as an almost exclusively French style, centred on Burgundy and Languedoc, with a few outlying monuments in northern Spain and Italy. English sculpture achieves about three references in footnotes. Western France, the Auvergne, twelfth-century Germany, and Southern Italy (except for the Bari throne) are, among areas similarly neglected. These exclusions are not necessarily a cause for criticism, since the book

is clearly not intended as a survey. However, it would have been nice to find a rather more adventurous approach, and some attempt to incorporate new "key monuments" into the traditional canon. For example, the superb capitals from Nazareth, which Tom Boase called the finest things in Romanesque art, surely deserve a place in any general study of the style. So does the work of Benedetto Antelami, perhaps the most accomplished sculptor of the twelfth century, while the exclusion of well-known monuments such as St Pierre at Aubay or St Trophime at Arles further restricts the field.

The list of what might be called first-division Romanesque monuments is probably shorter in this book than in previous general studies. Although Hearn sticks entirely to the traditional list, he excludes a number of what were previously considered "key monuments". Thus the cloister at Silos is relegated to a footnote, because some recent research suggests that it dates from c.1135, rather than c.1070 or c.1100. A correlation between importance and date is of course invaluable if one is tracing the detailed development of a style, but if we are concerned to understand how the Romanesque sculptural style came about and its rationale then precision in dating is less crucial. There is a poignancy here, for one of the monuments which is still allowed to be crucial, the Bari throne, has been and currently still is the subject of dating arguments of the sort which allow Hearn to disregard Silos.

It would be wrong to judge this book on the basis of what it excludes, however, and we must ask whether it provides a coherent view of its subject. The decline of monumental sculpture in the late Roman world, with its occasional survivals and revivals, is the first subject to be considered. Hearn argues that sculpture survived only in what had been remote provinces of the Western Empire, and the sculpture found in Visigothic Spain is taken to exemplify the flat, linear style, which he sees as the ultimate debasement of the classical tradition. The validity of this view is to some extent questioned by the fact that the clearest survival of antique-inspired figural sculpture occurred in one of the genuinely remote provinces of the empire, the British Isles, where it is found on the Ruthwell and other crosses. These truly represent the decadence of the antique mode, while the linear forms found at S Pedro de la Nave in Spain or Cividade in Italy (forms which may be closely paralleled in other arts) can be seen as the birth of a new, specifically medieval aesthetic. This is not Hearn's view, however; for him the Carolingian Renaissance was only a fleeting revival of a moribund tradition, important in terms of the past rather than of the future.

An interesting suggestion is made that the group of monuments in south-western France, centring round the lintel of St Genes-des-Fontaines, which are so often taken as the first tentative examples of Romanesque architectural sculpture, are associated with the fading tradition of the antique. If this concept of a fading tradition is accepted, then Hearn is surely right to see St Genes as part of it; equally, the St Genes group might cause one to wonder if the whole of early medieval sculpture can really be described in terms of the demise of the antique.

The beginning of true Romanesque sculpture is to be found, Hearn claims, in the context of the decoration of capitals in the eleventh century and also in a series of relief slabs mostly from Germany. The importance of both these groups of material is generally recognized, but the rigid division of sculpture on the basis of its location tends to oversimplify the problem. The view that a carved capital is significant because it is a capital, rather than because it is a piece of sculpture, is hard to sustain. One result of this approach is that capitals, which are seen as important in the eleventh century, cease to have such importance in the twelfth. Apart from the section on early capitals, and a subsequent dis-

cussion of the Cluny choir and the Moissac cloister, this most fruitful field for the Romanesque carver is not discussed. This deprives us of some of the best and most characteristic Romanesque works, and makes it difficult for Hearn to give a balanced picture of many of the major monuments.

The same simplification is reflected in the section of the book which deals with what are termed "The Crucial Monuments c.1100". This is an exclusive group of five monuments: the altar and ambulatory reliefs of St Sernin Toulouse; the Bari throne; the facade of Modena cathedral; the pulpit of S. Ambrogio, Milan; and the Cluny capitals. Hearn's views are consistently interesting here, and the singular aspect of his approach is to see these sculptures as in some sense a unified group. Each does illuminate the other in an oblique fashion, although the altered and undated Milan pulpit seems out of place. The sense of the grouping breaks down somewhat in the following chapter, where sculpture at both Moissac and Compostela is attributed to the hand of Bernard Gilduin, who carved the Toulouse altar. If this stylistic line is to be followed (particularly to Compostela) it would have been easier to consider the monuments together. To see Moissac and Compostela as a second stage in the development of Romanesque sculpture is to make the problem less complex than it really is.

The later pages of the book are devoted to a study of the emergence and growth of the sculpted portal, from Cluny and Moissac to Senlis and the Chartres transepts. This view of the history of sculpture from c.1120 to c.1200 in terms of doors and facades is similar to that which sees the history of Gothic architecture entirely in terms of vaults, and in both cases the approach has its flaws. Here, as elsewhere, Hearn's observations are always revealing and if this book does not provide us with a definitive introduction to Romanesque sculpture it will find an honourable place in the historiography of the style.

The Wetherfield Collection of Clocks by Eric Bruton (264pp with 250 illustrations. Northwood Books, 93-99 Goswell Road, London EC1. £15. 0 7198 05150 8) is a study of the famous collection of English clocks made over thirty years by David Wetherfield and sold in 1928. The book which serves as a guide to the dating of English antique clocks presents the collection chronologically and has separate chapters on technical features, lantern and hanging clocks, bracket clocks, longcase clocks, and marquetry and veneering. Many of the dates have been revised and the book provides much new material on the restoration of the collection. The book is illustrated with photographs taken from an unpublished sale album and with line drawings.

Rationally recreational

By Helen Rosenau

F. HAMILTON HAZLEHURST:
Gardens of Illusion: The Genius of
André Le Nôtre
418pp. Vanderbilt University Press.
\$38.95.
0 8265 1309 7

This handsome and well-illustrated publication is true to the spirit of Le Nôtre: it concentrates on essentials and refuses to be side-tracked. It is also sober, meticulous and to a certain degree monotonous, but so is the art of the great garden planner, André Le Nôtre (1613-1700) who has found in the Sun King, Louis XIV, an enlightened and effective patron. The most outstanding of Le Nôtre's works were indeed sponsored either by the King or by his courtiers and entourage, among them Madame de Maintenon.

André Le Nôtre was born in his home in the Tuileries garden, the son of Pierre Le Nôtre, Premier Jardinier du Roi; he was influenced by Jacques Boyceau, the distinguished writer on gardens, known from his treatise *Traité du jardinage selon les raisons de la nature et de l'art* of 1638, to whom Franklin Hamilton Hazlehurst devoted an earlier book. Le Nôtre was a pupil of the painter Simon Vouet and François Mansart was probably his master in the field of architecture. He married Françoise Langlois, a member of the lesser nobility, and became the father of three children, being apparently a devoted family man, well integrated in his entourage and ready to rise in the social scale. He was not only an employee but also a friend of Louis XIV, a fact paralleled in the careers of François Mansart and his great-grand-nephew Jules Hardouin-Mansart. In 1679 Le Nôtre visited Rome, but by this time his style was formed.

Garden design was an important artistic opportunity. It is well to remember that it was earlier based on Italian influence, and that the dramatic landscapes of Rome and the Campagna had to be translated into the comparatively flat and arid terrain of Paris and its environs. It was there that Le Nôtre displayed his main activity. His gardens range from Vaux-le-Vicomte for the ill-fated Nicholas Fouquet from 1656, via Versailles from 1664 to the Tuileries of c.1670 and the Palais Royal of c.1674. But more intimate gardens like Sceaux are also worth remembering; here Le Nôtre added to an earlier castle the by then well established convention of a regular royal garden for Louis XIV's minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert. He did the same at Maintenon (1675-1678) and the Convent School of St Cyr, after 1685, both connected with Madame de Maintenon, the King's morganatic wife. Marly may well be an exception, since the twin rows of courtyard

houses - a tribute to informality - a new departure in royal planning - are characterized not so much by garden as by architectural design.

The main features of Le Nôtre's plans are a large axial avenue, dividing the garden into two symmetrical halves, with accompanying flower beds, *bosquets* and *ballustrades* (groves and grass plots) including lakes, waterfalls and fountains. It is typical of him that he added a cascade even to the modest plan of Sceaux. His name is associated with many sites, including Greenwich, to which a number of German examples, such as Ludwigsburg and Schwetzingen, might possibly be added, though such local traditions cannot be substantiated. He emphasizes the element of surprise in Le Nôtre's gardens, which is aesthetically essential, since an unadorned symmetry would be tedious, even to seventeenth-century taste. Allen has already suggested in *Architecture* that "all the plan should have a certain variety, but not too much or too little" and this general rule obtained also for Le Nôtre, the problem being just how much variety was required.

It is important to remember that town planning and garden design had gone hand in hand even before the seventeenth century. The enclosed and tidy Renaissance garden echoes the Renaissance palace, and the idea of the *patte d'oie* was ultimately based on the Vitruvian tradition; it represents the segment of a polygon, and was adopted, for example, in the plans for the Place de France in Paris. (This layout, which was never executed, was seen in an engraving by Claude Chastillon of 1610). From 1631 onwards, Cardinal Richelieu had pioneered a new town located near his palace, but it did not develop and the garden is still of a rectangular pattern. Another element affecting garden design was the opening up of forests for hunting, which meant creating regular alleys. It is in this tradition that the town and gardens of Versailles have to be set, the former presumably designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the latter by Le Nôtre.

Charles Perrault in his amazing *Mémoires de sa vie*, stressed the importance of the Royal gardens to Parisians, because of the need of fresh air for convalescents and for the public generally. The lack of recreational facilities was particularly acute in Paris. Colbert, Louis XIV's minister, failed to understand this and advocated closing the Tuileries gardens, until persuaded otherwise by Perrault.

As the gardens of Le Nôtre are steeped in the reality of absolute monarchy, it is difficult to understand the title of Hazlehurst's book *Gardens of Illusion*. They are, rather, gardens which realize a subscribed goal: of revealing and enhancing the idea of a rationally controlled, satisfying environment. Le Nôtre's is an art form which was and fell with the Ancien Régime. How far it could be adapted during the French Revolution is an interesting question, since a controlled environment was one of the aims of that period too, and festivals of liberty, such as those arranged by the painter J. L. David, were indebted to the formal Royal tradition.

The illustrations in this book, including the line-drawings provided by Philetus H. Holt III, stand up well when compared with the Le Nôtre originals. As to the text, Hazlehurst writes history in a traditional manner. He is visual in his material, whether recorded in archives. He includes full and useful notes, a glossary and bibliography. Like Le Nôtre, he gives us some, but not too many surprises.

But after this sober presentation, does he not feel inclined to venture further? The present book is a popularizing eye-opener but we still need a fuller interpretation of Le Nôtre. Le Nôtre does not come alive because he is submerged by facts.

Carol Rumens

The historical novel: violent inventions...

By Robert Hewison

C. NORTHCOTE PARKINSON:
So Near So Far
227pp (with 6 maps). John Murray.
£6.95.
0 7195 3813 0

JEAN STUBBS:
The Ironmaster
415pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 27311 7

RICHARD HOUGH:
Buller's Guns
247pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£6.50.
0 297 77908 7

BERNARD CORNWELL:
Sharpe's Eagle
264pp. Collins. £6.50.
0 00 221997 2

K. M. CAMPBELL:
Honours of War
205pp. Allen and Unwin. £7.95.
0 04 823176 2

MARGARET MAYHEW:
The Flame and the Furnace
203pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.50.
0 241 10525 0

THOMAS MARRIOTT:
The Pagan Land
391pp. Michael Joseph. £7.50.
0 7181 2000 0

RACHEL SUMMERSON:
Hearts are Trumps
295pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £6.95.
0283 98749 9

DON BANNISTER:
Long Day at Shiloh
277pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
£6.95.
0 7100 0727 2

"You were saying, Sir Roger," said Ravensglass, "that you have crowds here in summer. These are mostly visitors, I should suppose?" "Well, you know what the effect of the recent war has been. Folk who would previously have gone on tour to the Rhineland and Italy were unable to land on the Continent with any safety. They made Westmoreland a substitute for the Alps. Then this fellow Wordsworth came to live at Grasmere about three years ago..." "But he was born here, surely?" "Lowther interrupted. "He was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland. Then comes this other fellow Coleridge - heaven knows where he comes from - and the Lakes are made fashionable."

It is likely that most readers of the TLS meeting this undigested lump of potted history in a novel would give a snort, and throw the book aside. But C. Northcote Parkinson's *So Near So Far* is representative of a genre of writing that appears to have the firm confidence of publishers and public alike, though it rarely gets any critical attention, either praise or blame. The "literary novel" is reported to be dying on its feet, its page numbers visibly shrinking along with its print run and its readership, but fiction continues to flourish in other forms. One of these forms is the historical novel, or more precisely (since the usual term suggests that these novels have a historical accuracy which they don't in fact possess), the history-novel.

Though the nine books under review have little in common other than that they are all set in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the fact that they come from nine separate imprints suggests a general faith in the genre on the part of commercial publishers. Not only that, *So Near So Far*, Jean Stubbs's *The Ironmaster*, Richard Hough's *Buller's Guns*, and Bernard Cornwell's *Sharpe's Eagle* are merely single volumes in series featuring the same character or family. None of them will come into the category of "Bestsellers", whose various classi-

fications John Sutherland discussed in his study published earlier this year, but it is likely that their hardcover sales will make a reasonable return, and their eventual appearance in paperback bring a sustaining profit. There is safety in history, but the question remains as to what satisfactions there are in writing such works, and what satisfactions there are in reading them. The history-novel, after all, is still contemporary fiction.

The use of anterior settings enables the history-novel to accommodate variations on the narrower forms of war-novel, family-narrative, spy-thriller and romantic fiction (along with its sado-masochistic sister, "the bodice-ripper"). The essential elements of the genre, in descending order of obviousness, are historical events, technology, violence, and - a long way behind violence in quantitative and qualitative terms of bodily satisfaction - sex. Almost entirely absent are character and plot. A concern for the intrinsic qualities of language and prose style - one of the defining elements in the literary novel - is rigidly excluded by the demands of naturalism.

The fact that actual historical events impose their own aleatory narrative helps to account for the weakness of the plots. Both *Sharpe's Eagle* and K. M. Campbell's *Honours of War* are set in Spain during the Peninsular campaign, while *So Near So Far* is the latest in a series on the Hornblower model, covering the naval activities of one Richard Delancey during the Napoleonic era. Delancey and his military counterparts lead their fictional lives in a tenuous relationship to real events. *So Near So Far* includes a totally implausible attack by steamboat on Walmer Castle; Bernard Cornwell has to invent an incident in the battle of Talavera, but is careful to point out that he has. The nearer a protagonist gets to a historical figure - Pitt, Wellington, Queen Victoria - the less convincing both become.

As to the accuracy of the historical research, the non-specialist reader will have to take the author on trust. Yet the source-bound author is unlikely to challenge conventional historical judgments. It is noticeable how frequently both military and naval officers are concerned, with administrative details that can be lifted off regional archives or simply recite passages from drill or training manuals of the period. *So Near So Far* is almost pure bunkum, but it is certain that Northcote Parkinson has the rigging of the Vengeance precisely right. The accurate account of technology, rather than the dialectic of history, concerns these writers most, and a correctly reeled fore-top gallant will make up for any vagueness about the significance of changes of government. History removes the need for invention, so the narrator can concentrate on inventions.

A good many of these inventions concern guns. This is the case even in the two that concentrate on industrial history: Margaret Mayhew's *The Flame and the Furnace* and Jean Stubbs's *The Ironmaster*. Margaret Mayhew's novel depicts an eighteenth-century Sussex iron foundry at the moment when charcoal is about to give way to coal; Jean Stubbs's hero has the new technology mastered in time to profit from the revolutionary wars with France. Big guns, little guns, steam engines, accoutrements, costumes and saddles fill paragraphs and pages. If this reviewer has to read another discussion of the relative merits of the smooth-bore musket and the rifle he will place one, or both, to his head.

Much of the technology is applied to killing people. It is impossible to count the number of violent and horrible deaths in Thomas Marriott's *The Pagan Land*, a long novel plainly destined for the railway book-stalls. The setting is South Africa in the 1830s, as the Boers begin their treks away from British rule at the Cape and their territorial imperative brings them up against that of the Matabele. Marriott has clearly studied the Matabele infantry training manu-

als, and recounts the atrocities of both black and white in loving detail. He manages a hint at the origins of *upthield*, but a sharp stake up the anus is more to his literary taste. No other book matches the violence of *The Pagan Land*, though Bernard Cornwell's *Sharpe's Eagle* shows an unsadistic understanding of the brutalities of the Peninsular campaign, and indeed of military life in general.

History may reduce the need for a plot, but the conventions of narrative make the need for a hero or heroine inescapable. The military men are either paragons of prowess and virtue in the mould first cast by G. A. Henty, or, if they are at all interesting, they are social outsiders of some kind. Neither Richard Sharpe nor George Ingram (*Honours of War*) can afford to buy their promotion; Sharpe has even risen, most unusually, from the ranks. Jean Stubbs's ironmaster is a self-made man, a former blacksmith. Margaret Mayhew's is half French. In *Buller's Guns* Richard Hough tries to ride two horses by having two heroes, one in the ward-room, the other between decks, but they are both so brilliant and brave, and the book is so badly written, that they are unbelievable.

The choice of an outsider as hero seems a very twentieth century device. It creates conveniently defining social conflicts, but distorts historical reality. (The depiction of aristocrats, even when they are wealthy fools, also has its contemporary appeal.) And while a novel such as *Sharpe's Eagle* can be grimly convincing in one direction, the unwarying heroism and imperviousness to lead of its protagonist moves it in quite another. Lurking behind the naturalism of several of these stories is the old fairy-tale plot of the foundling who becomes a prince. In none of the books by male novelists so far mentioned - with the exception of Matthew Eastman's wife in *The Pagan Land* - are the women characters convincing. Such sexual en-

counters as there are tend to be of the bodice-ripping variety.

The Ironmaster and Rachel Summerston's *Hearts are Trumps* have more interesting women characters, though twentieth century concerns are again detectable in the heroines' rejection of the social impositions on their sex. The Ironmaster's sister, Charlotte, is the widow of an English Jacobin and a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft (who is referred to, but does not appear). She is eventually transported to Australia for lending intellectual support to a Luddite revolt. The novel is the centre of a family trilogy and is badly apportioned between brother and sister. Charlotte does not seem a very likely figure. There is no violence at all in *Hearts are Trumps*: Flora Pent is the daughter of another northern self-made man, whose money has brought him to London and the threshold of high society. Flora reads books and refuses arranged marriages. The topside and underside of London in the 1860s are well described, and Rachel Summerston has read her Victorian sex manuals, but there is still an element of fairy tale: the princess gets her prince.

If the history-novel-as-contemporary-fiction thesis holds good, then what we are presented with is an interesting conflict of attitudes. Most of these novels contain violence to people and to landscapes - the industrial novels have an ambivalent attitude to industrialization. *The Ironmaster* reads in places like a cross between *Hard Times* and *Mary Barton*. The protagonist tends to be the outsider, or a rebellious insider. Yet all the novels celebrate conquest and the goddess of getting on. *The Pagan Land* is an imperialist parable. It would seem that the capitalist individualist ethic flourishes, or if you prefer, that fiction favours fairy tales.

There is one novel here, however, which conforms to the category of history-novel yet transcends it. It is the most documentary but also has

... and a watery grave

By Richard Brown

DAVID BUTLER:
Lusitania
734pp. Macdonald. £7.95.
0 354 04183 5

The so-called omniscient narrator, who sees everything and effortlessly brings it all before our eyes, went missing, presumed dead, at the start of this century. But that, of course, was only in the serious novel. In fiction designed to attract a wider public, one less aware of the epistemological problems of our age, the narrator's all-seeing eye is still wide open. It is, for instance, much in evidence in David Butler's *Lusitania*, a full-scale reconstruction of the famous passenger-vessel sinking that arguably brought the United States into the First World War.

Butler's omniscience most likely owes something to the connection with television that has characterized his writing career since he began by writing scripts for the serial drama *Emergency Ward Ten*, in which he also acted. His three novels, *Disraeli*, *Edward VII and Little*, were all the products of ATV historical reconstructions and in this kind of television drama omniscience is very prominent. Like TV historical dramas, Butler's novel has no personalized narrator but rather a purportedly objective "camera eye" style.

By this means we get what seems to be the full historical picture. We see Kaiser Wilhelm and the naval review, Admiral Tirpitz and his "Schrecklichkeit" policy of terrorism and submarine warfare, Woodrow Wilson in America and Churchill and Grey in England. Indeed, in a flashback in the prologue, we have a résumé of the outbreak of the war

from the shooting of the Archduke in Sarajevo to the FA Cup winners of 1914 (it was Burnley if you must know). Whereas an academic historian might waver about the status and function of his material, Butler takes the broad lines of history as ready-made. He concentrates on getting certain details right, on satisfying various aspects of a reader's curiosity and on inventing human-interest stories at which the historian's mind would quite properly boggle.

Judged within these limits, *Lusitania* is in that all-purpose critical phrase which can cover everything from getting the costumes right to putting grammatical sentences together, "well done". Butler is equally at home with political leaders, with spies in New York, with the wholesome family of a Canadian volunteer, or in the engine room of a German U-boat. He is also unflinchingly knowledgeable about naval furniture of all kinds. There is, after all, a considerable bulk of war-at-sea fiction and he knows quite well that his audience would be quicker to spot some inaccuracy in naval uniform than to worry about historiography.

There is a vein of stereotype in some of Butler's characters, especially the women. The perfect gentleman on the sinking ship give up their life-jackets, insisting that the women and children go first; and this is not the sort of book where the captain is likely to desert his ship. But in most cases these stereotypes are quite fleshly ones, not so much improbably as slightly too probable to be true, and in *Lusitania* the U-boat captain who feels the mental and moral pressures of his command, there is quite a substantial character study.

Lusitania might be seen to belong to several of the bestseller genres

the most literary merit. Don Bannister's *Long Day at Shiloh* is simply that, an account of the Battle of Shiloh on April 6 1862. One should not be misled by the American appearance of the book: Bannister is English and his novel is one of Routledge's rare investments in fiction; but the subject matter and current publishing economics combined to demand an American design. And the book is all the better for it.

Long Day at Shiloh has no hero beyond the collective Union army, from whose side the battle is reported. The focus is General Grant, and the extent to which he does not know what is going on creates a tension which a two-sided view would dissipate. Grant's surprise and ignorance is matched by that of his men, as Bannister moves in short cinematic takes through the tents and entrenchments of his army. The account has been built up from careful research into eye-witness reports and military histories, but the invented dialogue with its occasional poetic spelling brings the material alive - and shows that concern for language absent from so many other historical novels. Even Bannister, however, cannot resist a description of a drunken runner naming the parts of the Ward rifled cannon.

Contained by the action of a single day and animated by the imaginative quality of the writing, *Long Day at Shiloh* takes all the lessons learned from John Keegan's documentary *The Face of Battle* and produces a book which finds a proper balance between history and the novel. In his conclusion to *Bestsellers* John Sutherland rightly argues for the cultural significance of less than literary novels, though he also points out that while they bring entertainment they provide "nothing in the way of serious intellectual, moral or social disturbance of received stupidity". As a battle-book, *Long Day at Shiloh* has an intellectual vigour which, for all their entertainment, most other history-novels lack.

classified in John Sutherland's recent study. There is clearly something of the "true history of the war" and the "disaster types", and even perhaps original insights about the status and function of his material. Butler takes the broad lines of history as ready-made. He concentrates on getting certain details right, on satisfying various aspects of a reader's curiosity and on inventing human-interest stories at which the historian's mind would quite properly boggle.

The novel's central subject-matter is, of course, not new, and when it is pursued at this enormous length even the most devoted admirers of sea disasters might be forgiven for finding the going a little dull, especially if they remember in how few pages Hardy polishes off the Titanic or Hopkins ditches the Deutschland. Butler, however, counteracts boredom by indulging, over the last couple of hundred pages, in more morbid curiosities. As the boat sinks and the passengers try to escape, the "camera eye" scans relentlessly from deck to deck, crushing, bruising, maiming, dismembering, despoiling and eventually drowning all in sight. Here Butler's imagination really gets into top gear as bodies are sucked into the sinking ship's funnels and belched out again, or dragged down by its radio wires. The stated moral of Butler's novel is that "War is Hell"; but it makes for exciting reading, even if most of the preconditions about narrative on which Butler's novel rests sank at about the same time as the Lusitania itself, and with similarly far-reaching consequences.